

IMMIGRATION

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Immigration, as announced by the national board, April 2008:

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the United States.

To complement these goals, the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for individuals already living in the country without legal permission to earn legal status.

The League supports federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

Criteria for Legal Admission to the United States

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- Family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens.
- Flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries.
- Economic, business, and employment needs in the United States.
- Education and training needs of the United States.
- Educational program opportunities.
- Lack of a history of major and/or violent criminal activity.

Administration and Enforcement

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment.

The League supports:

- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status.
- Verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers.
- Significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers.
- Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies.
- More effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States.
- Increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the United States to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

US Residents Without Legal Permission to Earn Legal Status

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for individuals living in the country without legal permission to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, studying civics, and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting these immigrants who have no history of major and/or violent criminal activity.

League History

The 2006 Convention voted to undertake a study on immigration. After study and consensus, the new position was finalized in 2008 and sent to members of Congress.

In the 111th Congress (2009 – 2011), the League lobbied in support of the *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors* (DREAM) Act that would provide a path to citizenship for young immigrants who complete a college degree or serve in the military, thereby enabling them to be a fully productive part of American society. The legislation passed the House but lacked enough votes to overcome a filibuster in the Senate.

Because of a request made in 2016, the League clarified part of its position on immigration “to mean that simple illegal re-entry is not considered a ‘serious crime’ for League advocacy purposes.”

In the 115th Congress (2017 – 2019), the League opposed the rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy by the Trump administration. In response, the League again advocated for passage of a clean DREAM Act in Congress. The LWVUS Lobby Corps lobbied both the House and the Senate on this issue.

The League also opposed the *Securing America's Future* Act of 2018, which would have put immigrant youth at risk of deportation while supporting actions at our borders to separate children from their families and funding a wall at our southern border. During the 2018 Convention in Chicago, League members marched in support of immigrants and families while protesting this and other pieces of related legislation.

The League also opposed the Trump administration's Public Charge Rule, which directed immigration officials to limit the entrance of immigrants who they deemed would become more dependent on government funding to meet their basic human needs.

In early 2019, LWV joined a coalition of 44 organizations to file an amicus in *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California, et al.*, a trio of cases involving whether the US Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision to end DACA without a pathway for DACA-eligible individuals to remain in the country legally was legal. The US Supreme Court ruled in June 2020 that DHS's decision to end the program did not properly follow the *Administrative Procedure Act* and the majority court held that the agency failed to provide relevant factors associated with ending the program, making the agency's actions arbitrary and capricious. LWV issued a statement commending the court on the ruling and encouraged Congress to pass comprehensive reform legislation on immigration that includes a pathway to citizenship.

At the start of the 116th Congress, the League supported passage of the bipartisan *DREAM Act of 2021*. At the same time, the organization supported the *New Deal for New Americans Act*, which would expand access to citizenship, fund workforce development and English-language learning programs, and increase the number of refugees the United States resettles, while rebuilding the capacity and infrastructure of local communities to welcome refugees.

In early 2021, the League joined immigrant rights advocates in successfully urging senators to oppose amendments denying economic impact payments to mixed immigration status families. The League also asked the Biden administration to uphold basic due process and human rights for Haitians seeking asylum at the US border. At the same time, the League asked the administration to provide Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Cameroonian living in the US. The League urged the administration to designate Mexico for TPS.

At the 2022 Convention, delegates passed a resolution that LWVUS actively advocate and support immigration reform at all League levels. In the 117th Congress (2021 – 2023), the League urged the Department of Health and Human Services to allow DACA recipients to enroll in health insurance through the ACA, CHIP, and Medicaid. Near the end of the congressional session, the League urged Congress to pass legislation to protect Dreamers.

In the 118th Congress (2023 – 2025), the League included codification of DACA in a memo outlining priority issues for the new Congress. The League joined partners in urging the President not to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on an asylum ban that would make individuals ineligible for asylum if they entered the US without using an established pathway or applying for protection in countries of transit. The League also submitted public comments to USCIS and DHS opposing increases in immigration application fees. The League endorsed the *American Dream and Promise Act*, which would provide a path to permanent resident status for Dreamers and people with deferred enforcement departure and temporary protected status. The League also urged the President to finalize the proposed rule to allow DACA recipients to enroll in public health insurance.

At the 2024 Convention, delegates passed a resolution reaffirming the League's position calling for fair and humane immigration reform.