

## **LWV US Position on Education (from Impact on Issues 2018-2020, Pages 71-74)**

### **Integration**

The League is committed to racial integration of schools as a necessary condition for equal access to education. When busing became one means of achieving school desegregation, Leagues worked to ensure that laws were obeyed peacefully—building coalitions, running rumor-control centers, sometimes going to court to gain compliance. At the national level, the League worked to oppose antibusing/anti-desegregation initiatives in Congress. The League served as an amicus in Supreme Court challenges to the desegregation process. LWVEF maintained a desegregation clearinghouse and assembled League leaders and national policy experts for a workshop on metropolitan school desegregation in 1982-84.

### **Quality Education**

The 1974-76 LWVUS Program included the phrase “equal access to quality education,” reflecting League recognition that “equality” and “quality” are inseparable. However, LWVUS has never undertaken a process for determining a common League definition of quality education that could serve as a basis for action nationwide. Therefore, when the definition of quality is a key factor in a state or local community, a local or state League must conduct its own study rather than relying on the LWVUS position to take action. Many Leagues that have member agreement on quality education in specific terms use their positions to support an array of local and state educational reforms. A number of Leagues have used this position to oppose private school vouchers. LWVUS is a member of the National Coalition for Public Education, which opposes vouchers.

### **Tuition Tax Credits**

The 1978 Convention directed the National Board to oppose tax credits for families of children attending private elementary and secondary schools. Convention action was based on League support for equal access to education and support for desegregation as a means of promoting equal access. The League is concerned about the negative impact that tuition tax credits would have on the public schools by encouraging flight, particularly from desegregated schools. The League also supports federal efforts through Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulation to deny tax-exempt status to racially discriminatory “segregation academies.”

### **Federal Programs**

The League supports many federal education programs, some designed to meet the special educational needs of the poor and minorities and others to give women and minorities equal education opportunities. In 2012, the League conducted a study further defining the role of the federal government in education. See page 75 for that position. The League worked for passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in educational institutions that receive

federal aid. Subsequently, the League has focused on thwarting congressional attempts to dilute Title IX, as well as on advancing federal enforcement efforts. At the national level, the League was active in major court challenges to Title IX, defending key provisions and urging a broad interpretation of Title IX's scope. In 1983, the League filed an amicus brief in *Grove City College v. Bell*, a major Supreme Court case that narrowed considerably the prohibitions of Title IX. In 1984, after the Court's decision, the League supported efforts in Congress for new legislation clarifying congressional intent on the scope of coverage of Title IX and similar civil rights statutes. In 2003, the League responded to a Department of Education effort to scale back Title IX. LWVUS opposed attempts to weaken the law and lobbied in support of congressional resolutions affirming that Title IX had made great progress in establishing equal opportunity for girls and women in education and in school athletics. In July 2003, the Department of Education affirmed its support for Title IX without change. In September 2004, LWVUS signed on to an amicus brief in *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education*, supporting Title IX's original intent of broad and effective protection against gender discrimination by ensuring that individuals who bring discriminatory practices to light are protected from retaliation and reprisal. Under an LWVEF project to monitor sex equity in vocational education programs in 1981-82, several state Leagues evaluated progress toward meeting federal sex-equity mandates. Vocational education programs have significant impact on employment, particularly for women who have difficulty gaining access to training programs for higher paying jobs. In addition, LWV promoted the enrollment of girls and young women in math and science courses to prepare them for the jobs of the future.

### **Education Financing**

Many state and local Leagues have identified inequities in education financing during the course of their own program studies and have worked for reforms. Action on school financing equity takes place predominantly at the state level, where school financing laws are made.

### **FURTHER GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR USING THE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY POSITIONS**

In more specific terms, the kinds of programs the League supports include:

- Programs in basic education, occupational education, and retraining when needed at any point of an individual's working career.
- Expanded opportunities in apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs.
- Child-care centers for preschool children to give parents the opportunity for employment.
- Greatly increased educational opportunity through compensatory programs for disadvantaged groups beginning at the preschool level and extending through secondary education.
- Federal financial aid to help needy students remain in high school and to take advantage of post-high school training and education.
- A regional approach to problems of economically depressed areas that cuts across state lines. This approach can be handled administratively by such means as

interstate cooperation or more formal interstate compacts, or commissions made up of representatives of state and federal governments. Development programs should reflect the needs of the particular area and can include such measures as provision of education and training for available jobs, encouragement of new industry in the area, development and conservation of natural resources, and the building of public facilities.

- Programs that would inform individuals of their civil rights in education, employment, and housing, and of the opportunities open to them.
- Full use of mediation and conciliation in efforts to bring about integration of minority groups into full participation in community life.
- A federal clearinghouse for the exchange of information on solutions communities have found to problems of integration in employment, education, and housing.
- Programs to bring about effective integration of schools through federal technical assistance such as training programs and institutes for teachers and school administrators.
- Withholding federal funds from school districts that fail to meet realistic and effective guidelines and standards for school integration.
- Withholding government contracts from businesses and industries that discriminate in employment.
- An effective federal fair employment practices agency.

### **Education and Employment Criteria**

In evaluating federal programs that have been, or will be, established to provide equality of opportunity for education and employment, the League will support those programs that largely fulfill the following criteria:

- The nationwide effort to achieve equality of opportunity in education and employment should include participation of government at all levels and encourage the participation of private institutions.
- Programs should be carefully tailored to the educational or employment needs of the people they are intended to reach.
- People for whom community action programs are designed should be involved in the planning and implementation of those programs.
- The programs should be carried out by personnel competent to meet the specific requirements of their jobs.
- Programs should assist people to become self-supporting, contributing members of society.
- The programs should be nondiscriminatory with provisions for enforcement.
- Research, pilot projects, and continuing evaluation should be encouraged and, where feasible, built into programs.
- Programs may be closely related but should avoid unnecessary duplication.
- State and local governments should contribute to the extent their resources permit; at the same time, adequate federal funds for the establishment and continuation of programs should be available if necessary.

## **LWV Montana Position on Education (from state website)**

To promote efficient and equitable financing of public education, with the state funding its share of the cost, and to provide a basic education, beginning in early childhood, which produces graduates with critical thinking, reading, writing and mathematical skills.

### **Position History:**

The Montana Constitution mandates equal opportunity to develop the full educational potential of each person through a basic system of free public elementary and secondary schools, with the state funding its share of the cost of such a system. To determine whether this mandate was being carried out, the League conducted a study of the educational system.

The League found that the constitutional mandate was not being fulfilled. This was partly because such key terms as “equal opportunity,” “basic education,” “state share,” and “equitable funding” were not defined.

In 1997 the League adopted the following definition of a high-quality basic education: A basic education must offer all students a curriculum supported by technology, libraries and teaching staff, sufficient to provide individualized instructional [programs](#). A basic education will produce graduates capable of critical thinking, with reading, writing and mathematical skills. Together with knowledge of science, the humanities, the arts and governmental processes, these will combine to enable them to become productive workers and active citizens.

The dramatic increase in school budgets financed by local voted levies indicates that state funding is still inadequate. Funding per student is one convenient and objective measure for determining equality of opportunity. Funding levels must be combined with state standards for such essentials as staff, equipment, textbooks and programs. Equality of funding must be tempered by differences in the needs of students in different localities and situations.

Geographic isolation may increase transportation costs and necessitate higher salaries to attract teachers. Smaller schools have greater per pupil costs. Students with [special needs](#) or abilities are unequally distributed in school districts. Current funding relies heavily on property taxes. Variations in taxable valuation among school districts produces a wide disparity in mill levies needed to fund state-mandated programs.

In 1986 the Montana League adopted a Position supporting full state funding of a high-quality basic education and of state-mandated services. The League supported equity in funding and in taxpayer effort. The League also supported state accreditation standards to ensure equal opportunity for basic education for all students. Standards define the minimum program to be offered by school districts, which are free to provide programs beyond the minimum. The League favored broadening the tax base for school districts

and equitable taxes. Another League goal has been consolidation of schools and/or services, taking into consideration such factors as isolation, grade levels, and school size

### **EDUCATION, Revised May, 2014**

The League of Women Voters of Montana supports:

1. The existing structure which governs and funds the public school system of the state.
2. Changes within that structure to provide:
  - That the state fully funds a high-quality basic education;
  - That the state fully fund state-mandated [services](#);
  - That equity of funding and equity of taxpayer effort be primary goals.
3. Preschool Education for all children in the state of Montana.