



The League of Women Voters:  
Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.  
**Introduction to LWNCA POSITIONS**

*In the League of Women Voters, we influence public policy through education and advocacy. We accomplish that mission based on the position statements we've adopted on select governmental issues. Following is an explanation about how we arrive at those position statements.*

*(Adapted from LWVUS & LWNCA bylaws, policies and IMPACT ON ISSUES,  
<https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>, May, 2021)*

### **Our organization...**

The goal of the League of **Women** Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide. The League is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public.

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

### **We are truly a grassroots organization...**

The League of Women Voters takes action on an issue, or advocates for a cause, when there is an existing League **position** that supports the issue or speaks to the cause. This thorough grassroots process ensures that our advocacy is well considered by a broad range of people, understood by our members, and we have a sense of the political environment

### **What Is League Program and How Is It Decided?**

In League, "Program" means the issues that we choose for concerted study, education and action at local, state, regional and national governmental levels. Program can include both education and action.

The "program planning process" is part of what makes the League a grassroots organization; each League member has the opportunity to influence the selection of issues where the local, state, and national League will focus time, talent and money.

Every two years, League members engage in "Program Planning" for national and local Leagues, and in alternating years, for state and regional [LWVNCA] Leagues. Based on the results of the members' feedback, the respective League Board of Directors makes recommendations to the biennial convention delegates about the program to be adopted for the coming two-year period (which can include action on existing positions and/or new or updated studies).

Once the two-year program is adopted, the respective League board is responsible for carrying out the provisions of the biennial program. This could be initiating a study committee on a new position, or a committee to restudy a current position to make it more timely, culminating in the process of consensus or concurrence of the membership to form a new position or to reword an existing position. The adopted biennial program also could include advocacy on a specific position, or positions, to bring about legislative changes in government.

### **What is a Position?**

Positions result from a process of study and member agreement (**through consensus or concurrence**) about a topic or issue which is reached by group discussion after thorough research on the topic is presented in an unbiased manner. The purpose of having a League position is to use that position to influence public policy (i.e.,

take action or advocate). Without a position, action or advocacy cannot be taken. Once the wording of a position is approved by the respective League's board, it can be used for advocacy and action immediately

### Our Positions – LWVUS & LWNCA...

As stated, positions are arrived at through member study and agreement, in the form of consensus or concurrence, following which the positions are used for advocacy. Throughout the years, the League has continued its dual purposes of education and advocacy, engaging in studies on representative government, international relations, natural resources, and social policy.

Although the League's history of advocacy goes back to 1920, the latest version of LWVUS positions, *Impact on Issues*, covers advocacy efforts beginning in the 1960s. *Impact on Issues* is an indispensable resource for League members at all levels of League. A clear understanding of LWVUS positions, how they interrelate, and how they can complement and reinforce state, local, and regional Inter-League Organization (ILO) positions, strengthens the League's effectiveness on issues at all levels of government.

The member Leagues of LWNCA can use LWVUS positions (*Impact on Issues*) and LWNCA Positions within their respective jurisdictions to advocate on League issues of concern.

The latest *Impact on Issues* can be found at <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>. LWNCA positions are listed below and on the LWNCA website at [www.lwvnca.org](http://www.lwvnca.org).

### LWNCA Positions & League Principles...

The LWVUS principles constitute the authorization for the adoption of the Program at all levels of League and undergird all positions. (*The League Principals are listed at the end of this document.*)

According to LWNCA Bylaws Article IX. [Program] Section 2.

*The LWNCA program shall consist of: A. Action to implement the principles, and B. Those metropolitan, regional, and inter-jurisdictional governmental issues chosen every two years by the convention for concerted study or concurrence and action as follows:*

Following are the Positions of the LWNCA, listed in alphabetical order.

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## **LWV of the National Capitol Area (LWVNCA) Full Positions**

**As Approved May 7, 2016, and Readopted May 4, 2019**

*(2016 - Edited for clarity, grammar only. Date indicates when position was adopted and/or amended.)*

### **AIRPORTS**

1. Use of the three major metropolitan Washington airports [Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall (BWI), Washington Dulles International (IAD), and Ronald Reagan Washington National (DCA)] should be balanced based on overall airport infrastructure and capacity. Good ground transportation is necessary to all airports.
2. It is necessary to place limitations on the use of DCA. We support the enforcement of:
  - a. The current High Density and Perimeter Rules, and noise abatement procedures.
  - b. Other methods to limit aircraft types.
3. With regard to all three airports, jurisdictions should:
  - a. Enact responsible, comprehensive planning and zoning policies that limit development to industrial and/or commercial uses in the immediate vicinity of the airports.
  - b. Restrict residential development within the area directly affected by the presence and operations of the airports.
  - c. Consider potential development height when evaluating land use changes. (1985, 2007)

### **BELTWAY SAFETY**

1. In order to control speeding and unsafe driving on the Capital Beltway and its feeder roads, we support:
  - a. the use of additional patrol officers for visibility and enforcement
  - b. the use of automated photographic speed enforcement devices as an additional system of speed enforcement.
2. We support measures to increase truck safety on the Capital Beltway and its connector roads that include:
  - a. mandatory commercial vehicle safety inspections in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia,
  - b. increased fines for truck safety violations
  - c. limiting hazardous material carriers to certain hours.
3. Weight and length limitations for commercial vehicles using the Capital Beltway and its feeder roads should not be increased.
4. Efforts among federal, state and local governments to improve coordination of inspection and enforcement activities on the Beltway should be an ongoing process (1991, 2016).

### **COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH PLANNING**

1. LWVNCA supports:
  - a. governmental regulations of health planning (1976, 89),
  - b. regional coordination among healthcare systems and agencies in the Washington Metropolitan Area to include gathering data, sharing information, avoiding duplication of facilities and services, and controlling costs (1976, 89),
  - c. regional health education and information services to the public (1977, 89, 2016).
2. In order to increase the availability of medical services, LWV supports the concept of 24-hour clinics & the use of para-professionals (1977, 89).
3. There should be improved care for the elderly and an emphasis on community support as an alternative to long-term institutional nursing care (1977, 89).

## **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

1. We support legislation to permit the use of marijuana and heroin for medicinal purposes (1989).
2. We believe that testing for illegal drug use is a justifiable invasion of privacy when required as part of the hiring process for jobs affecting public safety and national security (1989).
3. Employees who test positive should be:
  - a. retested prior to any disciplinary action (1976, 89),
  - b. allowed to continue working or put on administrative leave,
  - c. required in each case to participate in an employee assistance program,
  - d. subjected to random drug tests for a one-year period following a positive test (1989).
4. Measures for solving the drug problem should include interdiction, enforcement, education/prevention, and treatment. Education and treatment should receive special emphasis and should be stressed over criminal justice sanctions (1989, 91).
5. Drug treatment programs that should be given public funding priority include detoxification and self-help programs, outpatient care, and the use of therapeutic communities, with aftercare as part of all programs (1991).
6. Treatment programs for drug users under 18 and for pregnant women should receive priority for public funding (1991).
7. Drug treatment should be incorporated into the sentence for any juvenile or adult convicted of a crime who tested positive at the time of arrest (1989).
8. Pregnant drug users should not be subjected to criminal prosecution just because they are pregnant. Pregnant drug users who are before the court for crimes other than the use of drugs should be placed in mandatory treatment through a justice system diversion program. We support the use of outreach nurses and counselors for pregnant drug users without the threat of legal penalties (1991).
9. Financial responsibility for drug treatment should fall, to some extent, on all of the following: insurance, patients, patients' families, governments (federal, state, and local), employers, and labor unions (1989).
10. Each jurisdiction in the metropolitan Washington area should set up its own treatment programs for drug users (1989).
11. The area jurisdictions should establish a public/private partnership through the Council of Governments (COG) to develop a long-range plan to meet treatment needs and to identify financial and in-kind resources. This partnership should include the private sector and citizen groups (1989).

## **D.C. FINANCING**

1. Budget Autonomy. The District of Columbia should have autonomy in budgeting locally raised revenue. The League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area (LWVNCA) supports legislation eliminating the annual Congressional D.C. appropriations budget-approval process.
2. Federal Payment. To address the District of Columbia's need for a stronger revenue base, the LWVNCA supports Congressional legislation setting forth the factors for determining an annual, predictable federal payment. The most important factors to be considered are:
  - a. taxes that the District of Columbia cannot levy because of Congressional prohibitions on the District's ability to tax; and
  - b. the cost of services provided by the District to the federal governmentOther factors might include the cost of state services provided by the District and the percentages of revenue that other U.S. cities receive from external sources. (2003)

## **LAND USE/HOUSING**

1. Regional land use planning for the Washington Metropolitan area should include a coordinated and comprehensive approach to meet housing needs. The goal of the housing component of a regional land

use plan should be to:

- a. provide adequate housing for all income levels,
- b. promote a balanced distribution of housing and employment for all income levels,
- c. improve the quality of housing and neighborhood environments (1975, reaffirmed 1989).

## **REGIONAL GOVERNANCE**

1. We accept the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) as the basic instrument for cooperative regional planning. (1966, 82, 2016).
2. We support granting COG sufficient authority so that it can resolve governmental problems that cannot be solved by local governments, planning boards and agencies(1973, 82, 87, 89, 2016).
3. Because COG should have some funding powers, we support assessments of member jurisdictions, user fees, and state and federal grants.
4. We support citizen participation at the regional level for COG and other inter-jurisdictional agencies (1973, 83, 2016).

## **TRANSPORTATION**

1. In support of the concept that there be some form of public transportation available for all, we endorse public policy in services and planning that:
  - a. supports a coordinated public transportation system which includes bus and rapid rail transit (1964, 70, 83, 89),
  - b. promotes and improves the present and proposed public transportation systems to encourage the use of mass transit (1963, 70, 89).
2. Priorities in transportation services and planning should include:
  - a. transportation systems services that are convenient, frequent, regular, speedy, and economical to the user and for the benefit of the larger community (1963, 64, 70, 83, 89),
  - b. reduced air pollution through the promotion of mass transportation systems (1970, 89),
  - c. allocation of road space for use of high-occupancy vehicles (buses, carpools, vanpools) to speed services, including traffic control measures.
3. We support public participation and supervision in determining information needed and in evaluating transportation proposals, transportation planning, and operations. Public involvement and decision-making should include
  - a. appointment of citizen members to decision-making boards with full authority to participate in their functions, and enough tenure to master the subject. (These members should be residents of the jurisdictions involved and include consumer advocates who do not have business connections or official roles in the transportation and appropriations process) (1971, 89),
  - b. every effort by local governments to include minorities, senior citizens, economically and/or physically challenged persons and other traditionally under- represented citizens on transportation and land use advisory committees and to facilitate this participation (1997),
  - c. open public meetings of all regulatory and public management boards (1971, 89),
  - d. compulsory paid publication in general circulation newspapers of proposals on which public review is to be held (1971, 89),
  - e. decision-making on the level of services for the regional mass transit system by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) with local input, including citizen input early in the decision-making process (1981, 89).
4. We support financial measures that include:
  - a. informing the public of the total costs of auto use and full public disclosure of the costs of transportation service, of who pays for service and who receives it, and of full cost/benefit information,
  - b. public investment to finance public transportation systems, to encourage substantially greater use

of mass transportation, to increase resources for bus and rail transit, to achieve a realistic alternative to private auto use, to provide funds for bus shelters and information services (1971, 83, 89),

c. reduction of subsidies to auto use, such as tax favors which support parking and free parking for employees paid out of public funds (1971, 89).

d. the use of a dedicated tax to help fund public transportation. The objective of such a tax should be to spread the costs of mass transit among the total population and to encourage the use of mass transit instead of the automobile. A sales tax which excludes such necessities as food and medicines would be the best means of financing mass transportation in the metropolitan area. The most important criteria to be used in evaluating particular taxes dedicated to transportation should be revenue potential, timeliness, and reliability (1980).

*Note:* the above position applies only to the Washington metropolitan area, and may be acted upon within the context of interstate regional cooperation, despite its partial conflict with the LWVMD, LWV-VA and LWVDC positions.

5. We support the integration of transportation and land use planning on local and regional levels (1997).

6. We support an interstate compact authority for regional transportation.

a. Members representing corporate, environmental, social, and political jurisdictions would best promote a regional approach to transportation planning.

b. Members representing political jurisdictions would best produce cooperation among/between local jurisdictions and would best promote efficiency and flexibility in meeting transportation needs.

c. The following areas of transportation planning should come within the jurisdiction of a regional transportation authority: Roads and highways; urban and suburban transit, including bus and rail; interstate rail, including connections among systems, i.e., Amtrak, Marc, etc.; pedestrian/bike paths; water, i.e., water taxis, ferries, etc.; bridges and tunnels.

d. Approved projects should be funded through: Federal funds appropriated through transportation authorization act; state and local contributions; user fees, including tolls, fares, and other fees; private funding; bonds; gasoline tax (2004).

## **WATER RESOURCES**

1. In order to ensure a safe and adequate water supply for metropolitan Washington and to restore the quality of our streams and rivers, we support:

a. conservation and protection of drinking water and supply sources. Sources of drinking water serving the metropolitan area, such as the Potomac River and Occoquan and Patuxent Reservoirs, must be maintained and protected against pollution from both point and non-point sources,

b. regional demand reduction and water conservation measures to reduce annual per capita use --

i) Contingency plans should be developed on a regional basis to provide for mandatory restrictions on water use in time of emergency.

ii) Measures to recycle treated waste water in industrial, agricultural, and other non-potable systems and measures to reduce the use of water of drinking water quality as a conveyer of wastes should be encouraged to the extent consistent with public health and hydrological requirements

c. water-sharing measures to meet emergencies and to protect the physical and biological integrity of the sources,

d. protection of ground water,

e. official consideration of new drinking water sources --

- i) Sources within the metropolitan region should be investigated as possible adjuncts to existing water sources
  - ii) Construction of major upstream dams on the Potomac or its tributaries for the purpose of providing additional water supplies for the metropolitan region should not be undertaken unless other options have been found insufficient to meet the essential needs of the region.
2. We support regional planning to improve wastewater treatment management. Final selection for new or expanded wastewater treatment facilities should be based on meeting national clean water objectives, protecting public health, and minimizing environmental, energy, and cost impacts (1979, 89, 2016).

*Note: 2016 - Edited for clarity, grammar only*

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### League Principles (the foundation of our positions)...

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States. The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace