

SUMMARY OF POSITIONS AND YEAR ADOPTED OR UPDATED

School District Enrollment Policy 1978

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports school enrollment policies which consider the following: a. equal opportunities in education, b. consideration of educational benefits as well as expenses, c. neighborhood grouping and d. age grouping

Good Government Standards The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that proposed changes in government(s) for Missoula must be measured against our seven standards of good government.

Land Use, Planning and Growth 1980/2002

The Missoula League of Women voters believes that there should be efficiently managed growth in the Missoula Valley. There should also be further planning with an emphasis on implementation and on coordination of all planning bodies.

Accountability of Local Board and Commissions 1986

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that boards supported in whole or in part with public funds must be accountable to the public and must be subject to written policies covering by-laws or rules of procedure, agendas, minutes, and procedures for appointments and reappointments. The League also believes it is the responsibility of boards, or appointing bodies in the case of appointed boards, to educate board members to the full meaning and content of the Montana Open Meetings Law and Montana Code of Ethics and to assure that they are followed.

Basic Principles About Public Education 1987

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes a primary purpose of public education in the United States is to provide 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.

Child Care 1988

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that the Missoula community and Missoula community governments have a responsibility to help maintain and improve the quality of child care for this community's children, i.e. health and safety, of children receiving care; training of caregivers; adequate monitoring of child care facilities for safety, health and sanitation; economic incentives for facilities; and the education of caregivers.

Protecting Missoula's Drinking Water 1997

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports government and private actions to protect the Missoula aquifer (our only economically feasible source of drinking water for the Missoula community) from contamination.

POSITION BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

League Positions

League of Women Voters of Montana Positions:

http://www.lwvmt.montana.com/positions_summary.html

League of Women Voters U.S. Positions:

<http://www.lwv.org>

LWVMISSOULA POSITIONS

Position on County Health Department Goals

Adopted 1979

Summary

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports County Health Department goals that emphasize preventive measures in [health care](#) services.

Background

League members include in their definition of preventive measures programs offering education, immunization, inspection of public facilities, and environmental planning and monitoring.

In adopting this statement, the League fully recognizes the need for other legally required functions of a County Health Department, but witnesses to emphasize preventive measures which, the League believes, have been too long ignored.

National statistics indicated that \$160 billion were spent on health care in 1977. This was a dramatic increase over the previous ten-year period, yet evaluations indicated no corresponding improvement in the health of American citizens. Only 5% of this health care money was spent on the prevention of disease, yet prevention is widely accepted as far more cost effective than treatment. The League believes tax and personal dollars can be well used in preventive programs.

Position

League members favor programs and policies that:

Stimulate self-help in health care practice. Encourage additional necessary health care services by appropriate agencies and groups within the community. Stimulate awareness and use of available services through the Health Department and other public and private agencies.

Position on School District #1 Enrollment Policy

Adopted 1978

Summary

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports enrollment policies which consider the following:

a.) equal opportunities in education; b.) consideration of educational benefits as well as expenses; c.) neighborhood grouping; and d.) age grouping.

Background

1. In defining "educational opportunity for all children," League members consider the quality of teaching most important, followed by the necessity for administrative support of good teaching. Opportunities for learning should be equally available for all students in terms of facilities and curricula.

2. If it can be shown that educational benefits are substantial, members feel the public is willing to bear reasonable costs--i.e., the cheapest school program is not automatically the best--or the worst.

3. Rather than a brief, narrow definition of "neighborhood school," League members prefer to describe the concept as: children and parents should have a sense of belonging to their school. Fracturing of neighborhoods is counter-productive as educational policy and divisive of families and normal social groupings. Fracturing of neighborhoods destroys the sense of community that should be part of the school experience of children.

4. Without identifying specific locations or groupings of grades, members accept alternative grouping of grades.

The Board of Trustees should formulate written policies to guide the administration in making decisions that have previously been made without this uniform direction. The League prefers flexibility within a written policy to the unpredictable quality of decision-making without any policy or guidelines. Position

The Missoula League of Women Voters:

1. Supports equal educational opportunity in all schools for all children and believes that this should be the primary factor in formulating enrollment policy in School District #1.

2. Believes in solving the uneven enrollment problems, while giving careful consideration to educational benefits as well as expenses.

3. Believes that children from a geographically-defined neighborhood need to attend the same school. The school needs to be as close to the childrens' homes as possible or, if necessary, the children should be bussed as a group so the neighborhood groups will not be fractured.

4. Believes the rearrangement of enrollment by new grouping of grades is the most acceptable way of accommodating present and future needs.

5. Believes that the Board of Trustees of School District #1 should formulate and publish policies to apply uniformly on:

a. School attendance boundaries; b. Bussing for equalization of class size; c. Bussing for safety; d. Prioritizing grades to be bused.

Position on Parks

Adopted 1972

Summary

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports the planning, development, and maintenance of park areas in the county and city of Missoula.

Background

Suggestion 1 was aimed at getting action started on parks. The general feeling was that some group as a county park board could begin planning to ease the responsibilities and duties of the county commissioners. The official group was not specified so that League could support any officially created group, e.g. county park board, county commission, city-county park board, etc..

Suggestion 2 expresses the strong feeling that land must be obtained now while it is still available. Then development could follow at a later date.

Suggestion 3 could correct the inability of the county to finance parks: The City now can levy a maximum of 7 mills for parks or they can be funded from the city budget. The county's financial recreational needs are restricted to \$5000 from the general fund for maintenance and are at most, 2 1/2 mills. Many people thought the financial basis should be a levy on that part of the county most likely to use the parks. This partial county taxation would require state legislation.

One unit thought creation of a County Park Board would be the most direct way to initiate these goals. Two units suggested assessing mill levies for parks as a means of increasing the park fund.

Position

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports the planning, development and maintenance of park areas in the county and city of Missoula.

Suggestions for accomplishing this goal are:

1. Creation of an official group to initiate and develop park plans.
2. Acquisition of land suitable for present and future park needs.
3. State legislation to enable local governments to more adequately finance parks.

The majority agreed on the following statements:

1. The ultimate goal is an effective metropolitan (e.g. city-county planning area) park department.
2. The burden of recreational costs should be born equitably by the people.
3. Cash, taken in place of subdivision park land, should represent the value of equivalent subdivided lots.

Position on Good Government Standards

Adopted 1981

Summary

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that proposed changes in government(s) for Missoula must be measured against our seven standards for good government.

Background

Equitable Tax-Benefit Relations: The first paragraph of the position statement addresses this issue.

Adequate Services: The ability of the government to deliver an adequate level of services both in terms of the desires of the community and health, safety, and welfare considerations is of utmost importance. A case in point is the delivery of sewer service to those built-up areas surrounding the city which are presently served by private cesspool and septic systems and whose presence poses a serious threat to the ground water supply because of contamination and pollution.

The League is also concerned with the problems of duplication of services, a common situation when there are competing local governing bodies with overlapping jurisdiction.

Organizational Clarity: Ideally, the government form chosen for our community must delineate clear lines of authority so that the citizen knows who is responsible for what. The League also believes that it is important to separate policy-making and administrative functions. The League believes that in order to comply with the provisions of the Montana Open Meeting law the government must be structured in such a fashion as to allow the public to participate and observe while at the same time allowing public officials to have discussions with each other to bring about better decisions.

Good Opportunities for Citizen Participation and Representation: The form of government chosen for the Missoula area should include provisions which allow for constructive participation of the citizens in the processes of government, such as citizen-boards, public hearings, neighborhood associations, etc.

Each citizen should feel adequately represented by his/her elected representative. There must, however, be a balance between the number of elected representatives and their ability to function in an efficient manner as part of the governing body.

Economy and Efficiency: Taxpayers are demanding that their tax dollars be spent wisely, and any form of government proposed for Missoula should stress this goal.

Likelihood of Obtaining Qualified Personnel: Those persons, elected or appointed, responsible for providing services to the people of Missoula should be qualified for the jobs they are seeking.

Political Feasibility: The political feasibility of any proposal for governmental change in the Missoula area should be considered by the League in the process of making a decision to support or oppose such proposal.

Position

Generally, the Missoula League of Women Voters believes that all residents of the urban area should have equal access to the same services at the same rates; that rural areas should be provided with different levels of services if that is desired by their residents; and that the residents of both urban and rural areas should be taxed to pay the fair cost of the services they receive, without either group subsidizing the other.

The League believes that proposed changes in government(s) for Missoula must be measured against the following standards:

- Equitable Tax Benefit Relationships
- Adequate Services (without duplication)
- Organizational Clarity (clearcut lines of authority)
- Good Opportunities for Citizen Participation and Representation
- Economy and Efficiency
- Likelihood of Obtaining Qualified Personnel
- Political Feasibility

Position on Land Use, Planning, & Growth in the Missoula Area

Adopted in 2003 after reconsidering the 1980 position on growth in the Missoula.

Background

This is the third time the Missoula League has studied land use, planning, and growth in Missoula to come to consensus on a position. The first was in 1973, when it focused on land use; the second in 1980, when it consolidated the position on land use with the 1980 position on growth in the Missoula area.

Since 1980, several significant changes have taken place that necessitate updating the League's position.

1. The city/county adopted a growth policy that incorporates much of the League's previous position. The Missoula County Growth Policy of 2002, which incorporates The Missoula Urban Comprehensive Plan of 1998, provides for effective planning consistent with the League's concerns for environment, energy, public services, the economy, and growth. The Growth Policy has two deficiencies: it fails to identify home-ownership as a goal and it fails to recognize the impact of the University of Montana on the community, especially on the housing market and neighborhood stability.

2. Although government/professional planners are doing an effective job of coordinating their efforts, at times elected officials and community members have not communicated effectively

on zoning, subdivisions, or neighborhood in-fill (in-fill is defined as development within existing neighborhoods, which allows a community to concentrate growth, thereby preserving valuable open space and saving the community significant infrastructure development costs). The complexity of these issues, combined with changes in ordinance and policies, have made it more difficult for citizens to participate.

3. The economic demographics of our community have changed significantly. Not only have more people moved into the Missoula area, they are generally older and wealthier than previous residents. These older, wealthier residents often live in single family, high-end homes, while moderate to low-income residents are left with limited housing choices, increasingly multiplex rentals.

Missoula 's industry based on natural resources is being replaced by service industries, including [health care](#) and retail.

Real income for the average Missoulian and Montanan has dropped since the 1970s, and in 2002 our average per capita income is now among the lowest in the country. These changes have combined to produce a shortage of affordable housing for Missoula county residents (affordable housing is defined as total housing costs , including utilities, equal to or less than one third [1/3] of the household's gross income). From 1999 to 2000, housing costs increased five times more that income. In 2002, more than 25.3% of homeowners and almost 50% of renters were spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing (Missoula County Growth Policy, pp 2-11). Waiting lists for low income subsidized housing run in the hundreds, and the number of single people requiring this assistance is increasing.

In this position, the League defines:

planning as a process governments use to develop ordinances and rules that guide growth; growth is new development; land use is how land is utilized as residential, commercial, industrially, recreational, agricultural, and as open space.

Position

I. The Missoula League of Women Voters believes the public has a right to participate and influence growth decisions.

A. Citizens must be allowed to protest zoning variances and rezonings; B. Citizens must be able to challenge administrative decisions that impact neighborhoods; C. Government entities should respect neighborhood input and the desire of people to protect the character of their neighborhoods; D. The design and density of new development should fit with existing neighborhoods; E. Government has a responsibility to provide clear, early public notification and education about proposed development and decisions.

II. The Missoula League of Women Voters accepts the premise that there will be continued growth in the Missoula valley. Generally the League believes that all growth (commercial, industrial, and residential) should be efficiently managed and that growth decisions made for the Missoula valley should be based upon:

A Land use planning and development that incorporates systematic planning studies and impact analysis; B. Environmental protection that respects the inalienable right to a quality environment as guaranteed by the Montana Constitution; that recognizes preserving and enhancing air quality, water quality and quantity, and green space is an obligation to future

generations; that accepts the natural limitations imposed by such determinants as soils, slopes, flood-plain, and other factors of geography and climate; and that preserves well-maintained open space, parks, recreational areas within the urban area; C. Available and affordable [clean energy](#); D. Human needs, which include privacy, health, safety, dignity, green space, public meeting spaces, and the preservation of aesthetic, cultural, and historic values; E. Access to public services (such as transportation, fire protection, police, parks, sewage treatment facilities, and schools) within the urban area, and with the costs of these services distributed equitably; F Maintaining a healthy economy.

III.The Missoula League of Women Voters supports commercial and residential growth that promotes:

A. Non-polluting industrial and commercial development; B Commercial development that improves the per capita income for Missoulians; C. Mixed-use commercial/residential buildings that respect neighborhood integrity and has neighborhood support; D Residential in-fill that is compatible with neighborhood character and density and that has neighborhood support; E. Sufficient supply of affordable housing, including rentals and owner-occupied homes.

IV.The Missoula League of Women Voter recognizes that there is a shortage of affordable housing in Missoula, not only because of economic pressures but because of the University of Montana's growing transient student populations. The solution to this problem is not compromising residential health and safety regulations. Solutions to this problem should include:

A The University of Montana recognizing its responsibility for housing students by building an adequate supply of student housing; B Public and private partnerships that focus on increasing the supply and improving the quality of affordable housing; C Tax incentives, fast-track permitting processes, and other means that encourage affordable housing development.

Position on Boards and Commissions

Adopted 1985-86

Position

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that boards supported in whole or in part by public funds must be accountable to the public and must be subject to written policies covering bylaws or rules of procedure, agendas, minutes and procedures for appointment and reappointments. The League also believes it is the responsibility of boards, or appointing bodies in the case of appointed boards, to educate board members to the full meaning and content of the Montana Open Meetings laws and Montana Code of Ethics and to assure that they are followed.

The League believes "that a board is more accountable to the public it serves if it:

1. Observes basic rules of procedure for the conduct of meetings.
2. Has bylaws and Rules of Procedure which are adhered to and are made available to the public.
3. Follows the Montana Open Meeting laws.
4. Adheres to the Montana Code of Ethics.

5. Works cooperatively with staff and its appointing body.
6. Has an informed quorum at every board meeting
7. Uses agendas and makes them easily accessible to the public.
8. Has regular and publicly accessible minutes which include a short account of each agenda item, points of disagreement, reasons for actions taken, motions passed, assignments, and steps taken when conflict of interest occurs.
9. Makes available to all citizens written information on the board's areas of responsibility and scope of power, and on board members' qualifications, responsibilities, and the time needed for serving on the board.
10. Has vacancies filled in a timely and open fashion using a well-publicized and standard procedure.
11. Has terms rotated or is staffed to preserve continuity while bringing in fresh ideas.
12. Encourages new appointments rather than automatic reappointments, particularly where terms are longer than one year.
13. Has board membership with a balanced cross section of citizen interest and occupation.
14. Holds meetings at a time and place conducive to public participation as well as convenience of its members.

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.

Position on Child Care

Adopted 1988

Position

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that our community's children deserve environments that nurture their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Therefore:

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that the Missoula Community and the Missoula community governments have a responsibility to help maintain and improve the quality of child care for this community's children; i.e., health and safety of children receiving care; training of caregivers; adequate monitoring of child care facilities for safety, health, sanitation; economic incentives for facilities and the education of caregivers.

A major determinant of high-quality child care is the caregiver's knowledge of child development which is then applied in developmentally-appropriate activities. Other aspects crucial to the quality of child care are: a stable, long-lasting relationship between child and caregiver (i.e., low turnover of trained caregivers); a partnership relationship between parent and caregiver assuring consistency between the child's home life and the child care experience; the child/staff ratio; and the adequacy of the facility.

The quality of care a child receives affects all learning later in life, as well as his social, emotional, and physical health. Therefore:

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that the quality of child care affects later cost-benefits to our community. Ensuring high quality care, now, will be more cost-effective than correcting future problems caused by the lack of such care.

A child's development, the stability of his or her family, and the economic life of the community all benefit from high quality child care. While high quality child care depends on a

partnership relationship between parent and caregiver, employers and government must [share](#) some responsibility in the wake of this social revolution that has redefined work and family roles resulting in a vast societal change which has radically altered the everyday experiences of our community's youngest citizens. High-quality child care will help children become well-adjusted, successful, and functioning and contributing members of society.

Position on Protecting Missoula 's Drinking Water

Adopted 1997

Summary

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports government and private actions to protect the Missoula aquifer, our only economically feasible source of drinking water for the Missoula community, from contamination.

Background

In the 1990s Missoulians became increasingly aware of the importance and fragility of their single-source aquifer. Scientific studies have revealed that the aquifer is a fast moving, readily replenished source of drinking water for the Missoula valley. But it is not immune to contamination. In 1990 bacterial contamination shut down Missoula's largest public supply well, requiring two-thirds of the valley's residence to boil drinking water for [three days](#). In 1993 a broken water line spewed thousands of gallons of water contaminated with heavy metals into an abandoned sump and forced closure of a drinking water well. Ineffective seepage pits in the Linda Vista area have caused fecal coliform and nitrate contamination of public and private wells. In 1996 floods and ice jams at the Milltown Dam scoured the river bed and contaminated the river with arsenic and heavy metal waste from the Milltown Superfund site, killing fish in the Clark Fork River.

In response to threats to the aquifer, Missoula city and county governments created a Missoula Valley Water Quality District, and the city adopted an aquifer protection ordinance. These two pieces of legislation offer Missoulians excellent tools to protect their drinking water supply. After studying the effectiveness of the Missoula Water Quality District in 1995-1997, the Missoula League agreed that the Water Quality District alone can not protect Missoula's aquifer.

Position

The Missoula League of Women Voters supports:

1. A coalition of government, private industry, and environmental watch-dog groups to protect the Missoula aquifer from contamination. The Missoula County Health Department is the most effective agency for protecting local water quality. Other governmental units should support the Health Department or other local government units and give them the authority necessary to adequately protect drinking water.
2. Encouraging sewer hookup in existing neighborhoods through the use of government grants and other financial incentives and requiring any new subdivisions or developments to lay dry sewer lines. The waste water treatment plant(s) should be improved/expanded to

accommodate the population of the entire valley and to remove nitrates from its effluent discharged into the Clark Fork River.

3. Encouraging continuous community-wide education of people of all ages about protecting the aquifer and how individual acts of negligence can impact water quality for the community.

4. Tough fines for violating pollution regulations and for threatening the quality of drinking water anywhere within the recharge area of the aquifer.

5. Regular publication of testing results from water quality inspections of Missoula area public wells.