

LWV/BF POSITIONS

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The LWV/BF supports bi-county cooperation in providing services and in planning for new facilities and programs. Benton County services should be located in the center of population. **Should legal constraints prohibit future growth of services in the center of population, the League of Women Voters of Benton and Franklin Counties supports moving the county seat to Kennewick or changing state law to remove the legal constraints.** (Bold position added in 2007.)

Budgets

The League supports;

- having county financial publications, including budget summaries, available at all local public libraries. The summaries should be understandable and explain total planned revenue and expenditures.
- citizen involvement in the budget process
- the publication of the agenda of the County Commissioners' meetings.
- holding Benton County Commissioner meetings on budget planning and other topics of local interest in the Kennewick and Richland area.

Home Rule

The League supports the concept of a home rule charter that would provide a separation of legislative and administrative functions for Benton and/or Franklin County. The goal of the charter should be to provide for a professional county executive, assessor, auditor, clerk, coroner, sheriff and treasurer. The number of commissioners could be expanded beyond the present three-person formula.

Jails and Courts

The League supports:

- the county district court system or, when feasible, a bi-county district court system.
- continually improved procedures for handling juveniles.
- cooperation in Benton-Franklin county jail facilities, programs, communications, records and personnel.
- education, work release programs, and an exercise yard provided by the jail facilities.

CITY GOVERNMENT

The League of Women Voters supports adequate funding for necessary programs and services, recognizing local citizen responsibility for funding programs and services. The League encourages cities to publish understandable financial material that is readily available for public use at city halls and the public libraries.

Richland City Charter and Council-Manager Form of Government

The League reaffirms its support of the structure, function and principles of the City-Manager form of government and the Richland City Charter.

TRANSPORTATION

The League of Women Voters supports public transportation. Sales tax is the preferred method for financing.

PARKS AND RECREATION (1991 Revision)

The League of Women Voters supports:

- regional planning and implementation of river shore development to carry out the following objectives (in order of priority):
 - 1) preservation of the unique natural quality of the area's river shore;
 - 2) enhanced recreational and cultural activities;
 - 3) contribution to the region's tax base.

Plans for river shore development should include:

- ☐ preservation of existing public riverfront land as public land with public access;
- ☐ continuous pathways and trails along the river shore;
- ☐ maintenance and preservation of the uncultivated sections of parks for the continued appreciation of indigenous plant and animal life;
- ☐ preservation of the Yakima River Delta/Bateman Island and other wetlands, wildlife habitats, environmentally and archaeologically sensitive areas;
- ☐ recreational facilities such as swimming facilities, bicycle/jogging paths and tennis courts;
- ☐ public facilities such as museums, science centers and performance centers;
- ☐ modification and beautification of the levees consistent with flood control.

Plans should exclude:

- ☐ vehicular or animal racing;
- ☐ heavy industry;
- ☐ high rise residential or commercial buildings.

Commercial development should be limited to that which clearly supports the three objectives stated above.

- conveniently located parks with adequate public access.
- making parks and recreation development a high priority in city and county planning. Each city and county should have an active and effective park board.
- the setting aside of acreage for parks in areas of urban and suburban development, before development.
- the continued development and maintenance of swimming facilities, bicycle paths, jogging trails and tennis courts.

- cooperation and communication among regional park departments and school districts.
- formation of volunteer committees to support the needs of the park systems.
- local bond elections and acquisition of state and federal monies to fund park development and maintenance.

LOCAL EDUCATION (1988 Revision)

Year round communication among teachers, administrators and the community is vital for a school district. Every effort should be made to utilize district and community resources to maximize the educational experience of each student.

Within the area of local control, the League of Women Voters supports:

- the use of the budget as a planning document that reflects program priorities.
- limiting class size to facilitate learning.
- new construction when necessary to accommodate a growing student population.
- curriculum adoption and evaluation as a continuing process with broad involvement. Curriculum should reflect local learning objectives, keeping in mind current research, integration of skills, individual learning styles, and opportunities for enrichment.
- the critical role of the principal as a well-trained instructional leader.
- an evaluation system that encourages continued professional growth among all staff members.
- continued staff development with extra attention to the needs of beginning teachers.

Student Health Needs

There is a broad range of health problems among Tri-Cities children and youth. They run from fatigue, lack of fitness and poor diet to substance abuse and teen pregnancy. Mental health needs are also growing more urgent as families find it more difficult to meet their children's needs. There seem to be many resources available in the community, primarily local government agencies, social service organizations, community groups and individual medical people. These resources are generally scattered, however, and not readily accessible to adolescents and low-income individuals and families.

Since a young person's health can affect his ability to learn and to get along with others, schools have an interest in promoting the health of their students. Therefore, the League of Women Voters supports:

- a comprehensive health curriculum taught in separate courses designed to reach every student and consciously reinforced and integrated into other appropriate areas of the curriculum from kindergarten through grade 12.
 - in addition to units on substance abuse, personal safety and human development, a comprehensive health curriculum should include: communication, social, decision making and refusal skills; mental health, personal and family relationships; physiology, hygiene, nutrition and fitness; safety, first aid and emergency response; medical/dental care and communicable diseases.

- lifetime fitness should be an important part of the physical education curriculum.
 - a comprehensive curriculum should emphasize the individual's responsibility for his own health, be appropriate to the student's development ages and interests and taught by well-trained personnel, knowledgeable about and comfortable with the subject matter.
 - because of the sensitivity of some areas of the health curriculum, in particular sexuality education, members of the community should be involved in the development of required courses. The League also supports providing students a choice of alternative approaches to sensitive subjects.
- in-service training for all school personnel to help them learn to identify changes in students, which may indicate health-related problems.
 - a formalized system in each school that is able to refer a student with health related problems and his family for appropriate assessment and treatment and provides necessary follow-up and support.
 - an increase in the number of school personnel whose primary responsibility is student health, both physical and mental.
 - the concept of school-based clinics as an appropriate way to meet young people's health needs and to encourage teenagers to assume responsibility for their own health care.
 - efforts to increase the involvement of parents, the medical community, social service agencies and local governments in improving the health of Tri-Cities children and youth.

HEALTH CARE (Adopted 1985)

The spectrum of health care delivery includes six levels of care: preventive, primary, secondary or acute care, tertiary or special care, restorative, and continuing care. Ideally, all these levels of care would be available within our community, eliminating the extra expense and inconvenience to people involved in going outside the area for health care. However, economic reality dictates that some services, particularly in the categories of secondary and tertiary care, will not be available locally.

There are a variety of provider groups, both private and tax-supported, involved in health care delivery including: hospitals, the health department, clinics, individual and group practitioners, educational and support groups, residential homes, outpatient services, health maintenance organizations, and day care centers. It is the position of the League of Women Voters of Benton and Franklin Counties that:

All health care planning involve opportunity or strong local input.

- spending decisions should favor programs that will be meeting a need currently unserved rather than duplicating an existing service.

- we encourage cooperation among the health care providers, to help avoid the unnecessary duplication of services.
- emphasis should be placed on preventive health care and educational efforts. It is recognized that individuals should be personally responsible for their own health and health care.
- hospitals need to remain economically viable and should be allowed and encouraged to develop new or alternative programs and services, provided the need has been assessed.
- the community needs increased services in the restorative and continuing care areas.
- the hospice concept is valuable and deserves community support and the expansion of services.
- the Benton-Franklin District Health Department should continue in its multi-jurisdictional format.
- the availability of health care insurance is an important factor in health care delivery. We support measures to ensure access to insurance for the greatest number of persons.