



FAIR HOUSING “SOURCE OF INCOME” POSITION PAPER

The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports “Source of Income” legislation to amend Titles 6 and 25 of the Delaware Code Related to Fair Housing law. Such legislation would make it unlawful to discriminate based on any source of lawful income for the purpose of determining income eligibility for real property rental or home ownership.

“Source of income” legislation would change the state fair housing code to include Supplemental Social Security (SSI), Housing Choice Vouchers (formerly known as section 8), State Rental assistance and other regular, lawful sources of private and public assistance.

Our position is based on several statements in LWVUS policy, including: “Opportunities for purchase or renting of homes and for borrowing money for housing should not be restricted because of discriminatory reasons...” Further, the LWV supports “...equal access to education, employment and *housing*” and, “...policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.”

The Delaware State Housing Authority’s “Delaware Housing Needs Assessment 2015-2020” (*September 2014*) states:

- “Some of Delaware’s strongest industries—particularly health care, tourism and retail—have many low and moderate wage workers, creating a significant demand for workforce housing.”
- “Almost half of all renters and one-third of all homeowners have housing challenges, defined as paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs, or living in overcrowded or substandard conditions.”

“Who Can Afford to Live in Delaware?” published by the Delaware Housing Coalition documents the extreme need of many of our state’s citizens for shelter. For example:

- An estimated 59% of Delaware renters cannot afford a two-bedroom apartment in their county.
- “Eight of the ten top growth occupations (2002-2020) in Delaware do not pay a median wage adequate to rent a two-bedroom unit in any county.”
- The housing wage--the income needed in order to pay no more than the generally accepted 30% of household income for rent/utilities or mortgage, utilities and taxes-- in 2014 for a modest two bedroom apartment in Delaware was \$20.09 hour (full-time , year-round).
- “Eight of the ten top growth occupations (2002-2020) in Delaware do not pay a median wage adequate to rent a two-bedroom unit in any county.”

Based on the huge unmet need for housing in the state, the League views legislation outlawing discrimination based on source of income as a natural move toward ensuring that low and moderate income Delawareans will have a greater proportion of housing stock available to them. This is an important step in fulfilling, as thirteen sister states have, the spirit and letter of fair housing laws.