



A Summary of LWV-VA Position Statements [document format]

Updated Spring 2023

Positions-In-Brief

Full wording of positions with history is contained in LWV-VA Positioned for Action, which can be found at www.lwv-va.org

The purpose of the League of Women Voters of Virginia is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and influence public policy through education and advocacy. While the League acts on selected government issues, based on positions reached after study and member agreement, it is strictly nonpartisan—it neither supports nor opposes political parties or candidates for public office.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that government policy, programs and performances must meet these criteria:

- competent personnel with clear responsibilities,
- coordination among agencies and levels of government,
- adequate financing,
- effective enforcement, and
- well-defined channels for citizen input and review.

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GOVERNMENT

DELEGATION OF POWER

Support for a balanced partnership between state and local government, including:

- Laws, policies and incentives that promote regional coordination and local action.
- Establishment of uniform powers and responsibilities of local governments by eliminating any outdated and unnecessary distinctions between cities, counties and towns. (1972 & 1991)

ELECTION LAWS

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that democratic government depends on the informed and active participation of its citizens; that voting is a right and responsibility; and that election laws, regulations and administrative procedures should be uniformly designed and applied, and adequately funded to facilitate and increase voter participation throughout Virginia. The League further believes that democratic government, at the state, as well as federal, levels depends upon the voters' faith in the integrity of election processes and election outcomes. Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Virginia supports election laws, policies, and funding to ensure that elections are secure and the outcomes verified.

Specifically, the League supports measures to ensure the availability of voter registration and to encourage and facilitate increased voter participation in elections, including: absentee voting by mail and in-person without having to provide a reason; an adequate number of voting machines and trained election officers; the use of satellite voting; split shifts for election officers when needed; online voter registration; the use of electronic poll books; and measures that take advantage of technological advances, as long as they are secure. (2011, 2015, 2021)

The League supports shared funding of statewide voter registration and election systems by the localities and the Commonwealth, providing adequate authority and resources to the Department of Elections (ELECT) and the State Board of Elections (SBE) for oversight and enforcement of laws and standards for registration and elections uniformly throughout the Commonwealth, and the facilitation of convenient yet secure voting for Virginia's military and overseas voters. (2011, 2015, 2021).

The League further supports measures to secure Virginia's voter registration database, processes, and equipment against cyber- and physical threats. The League supports the introduction of ranked choice voting as an alternative to plurality voting. The League believes in increased voter access, removal of barriers to voting, such as a photo identification requirement at voting locations, and the prevention of voter suppression. (2021)

FISCAL POLICY

Support for a responsible state fiscal policy that includes:

- A flexible and diverse tax structure that is based on a progressive income tax.
- Continuous evaluation of all programs for need, effectiveness, efficiency, and economy.
- Flexibility in developing local sources of revenue.
- State commitment to funding of state-mandated programs.
- Opposition to constitutional or statutory limits on state/local government spending or revenue sources. (1964, 1977 & 1979)

MONEY IN POLITICS

Supports limiting campaign contributions; regulating use of funds for campaign-related expenses; establishing an independent state agency to provide oversight and enforcement of campaign finance related activity; and regulating dark money campaign donations and preventing foreign governments from interfering with our state elections. (2023)

REAPPORTIONMENT & REDISTRICTING

Support for a decennial redistricting plan approved by the General Assembly, including establishment of a bipartisan commission to prepare a plan for legislative approval, and consideration of natural geographic boundaries, jurisdictional boundaries, communities of interest, and competitiveness in addition to the constitutional requirements.

In addition to the Virginia constitutional requirement of equal population, contiguous and compact districts and the Voting Rights Act requirements for protecting the voting strength of minority groups, the League supports the following considerations in redistricting:

- Natural geographic boundaries;
- Jurisdictional boundaries;
- Communities of interest; and
- Competitiveness

The League believes that the Virginia constitution should be amended to provide that redistricting will occur on a decennial basis only. (1985, 2007)

TRANSPORTATION

Support for regionally balanced transportation systems which efficiently and economically meet regional needs without adversely affecting planned growth or the environment.

- Regional organizations that set policy for a multi-modal public transportation program, that plan, coordinate, and are the designated recipients of federal and state funds, that operate or contract for services, and that could have taxing power.
- A mixture of public and private funding for public transportation.
- Increased local participation with some public funds utilized to encourage private support and the use of innovative financing methods, such as tax incentives to encourage private sector participation.
- The use of a variety of incentives to increase the use of public transportation.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND VIRGINIA LAW

Support for the legal recognition of marriage as an equal partnership, including:

- Policies that recognize non-monetary as well as monetary contributions to a marriage by each partner.
- Surviving spouse policies that specify that if one spouse dies without a will, the surviving spouse should inherit all property.
- Divorce policies that recognize separately acquired property before marriage and during marriage through gifts or inheritance.
- Elimination of the concept of "fault" in the court's division of marital property.
- Legal recognition of valid pre-nuptial contracts. (1980 & 1983)
- The League of Women Voters of Virginia Opposes Sexual harassment (2019)

NATURAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Support for achieving and maintaining acceptable air quality through:

- Adoption of strict vehicle emission standards.
- Development of alternative fuels.
- Programs and regulations that foster efficient transportation modes. (1993)

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Support for environmental justice as a guiding principle for all branches of state government.

Support for an expansive view of environmental factors that impact quality of life now and in the future, for meaningful community engagement from the beginning and throughout environmental decision-making, and for use of modern tools and changed practices to ensure that past environmental injustices are not repeated, but are mitigated. (2023)

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES: HYDRAULIC FRACTURING; URANIUM MINING

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in the Commonwealth of Virginia until there is sufficient evidence from robust studies to show that hydraulic fracturing will not have a negative impact on the health, safety, and well-being of citizens, local jurisdictions, or the natural environment.

Absent a moratorium, the League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that the Commonwealth of Virginia, including all relevant state departments and state agencies, and local governments, have a responsibility to safeguard Virginia's critical features and to ensure the public's safety, health, and welfare by:

- adopting strict systems for monitoring, regulation, and oversight of the hydraulic fracturing, including all related facilities, and fracking impacts on critical features (e.g. ground and surface water resources and recharge areas; geologic resources and seismic zones; historic sites and districts), public facilities (e.g. recreation areas, schools, wildlife preserves), local and regional infrastructure, and local and regional economies;
- developing and implementing systems of financial assurance so all fracking-related expenses incurred by the Commonwealth and the local jurisdictions are borne by the industry;
- granting localities authority to regulate hydraulic fracturing operations;
- providing state funding to local governments to offset the costs incurred by local governments;
- developing a state-level system for long term monitoring of local impacts and enforcement of regulation throughout the full life cycle of the hydraulic fracturing. (2017)

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports a moratorium on uranium mining until modern, enforceable and effective best practices are approved by an independent assessment team. (1983, 2014)

LAND USE

Support for state policies that include:

- Create state long-range comprehensive land use plan coordinated with local and regional plans.
- Protection of critical environmental areas through some land use controls.
- Assistance to and increased flexibility for localities in land use planning and control. (1975)

WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION

Support for a comprehensive state effort to protect the water supplies, including:

- Recognition of the connection between ground and surface water.
- Decision making based on the concept of sharing in the use of ground water.
- State responsibility for the collection of information on water resources and planning for future use.
- Land use policies that guarantee protection of water resources.

See also the position on Extractive Industries.

SOCIAL POLICY

ADULT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Support for addressing the crime of adult domestic violence through:

- Uniform law enforcement including mandatory arrest, reporting.
- Educational and training programs for medical, clerical, law enforcement personnel, and the public on the problem of adult domestic violence as well as conflict resolution.
- Assistance and training programs for victims. (1992)

ADULT JUSTICE

Support for an adequately funded judicial and corrections system:

- Serves all people without discrimination and incorporates restorative justice practices.
- Provides judicial selection by the General Assembly with the use of a nominating commission of lay persons and lawyers.
- Sentencing by judges.
- Effectively administered corrections system that protects society and rehabilitates offenders.
- Professionally administered local jails and community-based corrections.
- Policies that include alternatives to incarceration and use of community volunteers.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Support for state funding mechanisms and laws/policies that increase the supply of and equal access to safe, quality, affordable housing for all Virginians. (2021)

- Enhanced funds for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund.
- Private/public partnerships to obtain housing for the mentally ill.
- Consider a waiver for Medicaid to pay for counseling for housing options.
- Establish tax credits or other financial incentives for landlords and developers who build affordable housing, and local government policies that increase affordable housing stock.

CHILD CARE

Support for state policies that promote quality child care that is affordable, accessible, and equitable. In particular, we support policies that ensure all young children (0-5) receive safe, high-quality education and care consistent with their cultural and developmental needs, that all school-age children (6-12) have a safe, nurturing place to go after school until they can look after themselves, that all parents - especially minority and low-income parents - have access to affordable child care while they work, and that quality child care providers can remain operational. (1988, 2013, 2023)

CHILDREN AT RISK

Support for state and local policies that recognize the basic needs of all children including shelter, family, and community support, health care, food, education, and personal safety, including:

- Fund preventive services, rehabilitative programs, family support programs, crises services, court costs, and detention.
- Evaluations of programs and services.
- State mandated case planning and case management systems to assure timely access to services.
- Internal and judicial grievance procedures. (1989, 2013)

EDUCATION

The League of Women Voters of Virginia (LWV-VA) believes that K-12 public schools are the foundation of our democracy because public schools are open to all children, prepare students to become active citizens, and are financed by elected representatives who formulate policy.

The League supports a challenging curriculum, high expectations of students and teachers in mastering that curriculum, and appropriate assessments of student achievement for a quality education in the public school system K-12. In addition to the core disciplines of English, mathematics, science, history and social sciences, essential curriculum elements are listed under Part I: Quality Education in the full Education position statement.

The League supports professional education for principals and teachers and on-going staff development; class size appropriate to instructional goals; a safe environment for students and staff; discipline with preventative programs and a consistently enforced, well-defined system of rules; guidance counseling for academics and support services; and parental and community support and involvement. The League also supports all qualified students' having equal access to opportunities to select a specific program or school based on a system of equity.

The League supports state funding for public schools that ensures a high-quality education with equal educational opportunities for all children, including:

- Full funding for the Standards of Quality (SOQ) and other state and federal mandates;
- Increasing the state's share of education costs;
- Identifying and adopting a school funding model or formula for operational costs that—after adjusting for local cost factors—guarantees a funding stream that will allow all school divisions to offer programs and services at equitable levels, regardless of local funding capacity;
- Funding for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs for all children;
- See also the LWV-VA Child Care position.

- Increasing state capital funding to ensure that all students go to school in buildings that are safe, healthy, accessible, and conducive to a 21st century learning environment;
- Improving the operational funding formula for determining local ability to pay, using it as a basis for distribution of state education funds.

To support this priority, the LWV-VA believes that public money should go to public schools. Any K-12 school programs that receive public funds should be required to meet certain standards and criteria for their approval: administration, accountability, oversight, transparency, nondiscrimination, assessment, fiscal management, and operations.

- LWV-VA opposes public funds going to private schools and decreasing revenue for public schools.
- LWV-VA opposes tuition tax credit and voucher programs that provide scholarships to private schools.
- LWV-VA opposes private profit-making providers of K-12 schools and providers.
- LWV-VA supports following the extensive regulations in the 2018 Virginia Code for the establishment and oversight by public schools of public charter schools and virtual online programs provided by public schools.
- LWV-VA supports expanding Virginia’s Standards of Quality to include minimum standards for school construction, renovation, and maintenance to ensure that all students go to school in buildings that are safe, healthy, accessible, and conducive to a 21st century learning environment.

The League supports amending the 1970 Virginia Constitution to include language that will legally require the General Assembly to ensure a high-quality education for all students, not just “seek to ensure” such an education, as the 1970 language states. The language proposed for the amendment is as follows:

Article VIII. Education. Section 1. Public schools of high quality to be maintained.
The General Assembly shall provide for a system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the Commonwealth, and shall ensure that an education of high quality is established and continually maintained.
 (1993, 2003, 2018, 2023)

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Support for an adequately funded and separate Department of Juvenile Justice that emphasizes prevention and rehabilitation, to include:

- individualized treatment and training programs, with vocational and alternative education opportunities.
- family planning support.
- mental health and substance abuse counseling.
- community education and recreation programs for young children.
- alternatives to incarceration such as community service and residence in small group homes.
- Establishment of small therapeutic group or foster homes.
- the removal of juveniles from adult jails and their placement in a juvenile detention facility as necessary.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Support for comprehensive behavioral health care that includes both mental illness and substance use disorder.

- Access for all people to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services.
- Coordination of comprehensive and integrated care among Health and Human Services (specifically Behavioral Health) and other state departments such as Medical Assistance Services (Medicaid), Public Safety (re-entry planning, identification of behavioral health needs in jails/prisons, patient's rights, substance abuse, and drug/mental health courts), Housing (Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing), and Education (health education from early childhood through adult). These agencies must provide this care along with a focus on community-based services such as Community Service Boards (CSBs).
- Realignment of the funding equation so that a higher proportion of funds to CSBs rather than state institutions. This will result in more cost-effective care that is more responsive to client's needs.
- Adequate funds and other incentives to ensure sufficient trained staff at all levels of service.
- Continued efforts to decrease the stigmatization of behavioral health problems and care. (2018)

OFFENDER RE-ENTRY

Removing Barriers to Employment

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports the removal of barriers to employment for persons with criminal records. This includes support of what are known colloquially as "Ban the Box" efforts. (2015)

RESTORATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS FOR VIRGINIA FELONS

Support for the automatic restoration of the civil rights of felons, regardless of the nature of their crime, upon their release from incarceration or upon completion of probation or parole. The process should be easy to understand, accessible, transparent and fair with information about the process made available to all. (2009)

- The civil rights of felons in Virginia should be restored automatically either upon their release from incarceration or upon completion of probation and parole.
- The procedure should be identical for all felons, regardless of the nature of their crime.
- The process should be easy to understand, accessible, transparent and fair
- Information about the process should be available to felons, the justice and correction system and the general public. (2009)