

LWV CHICAGO POSITIONS IN BRIEF -- 2019

Representative Government

Districting

LWV Chicago supports holding aldermanic elections after ward boundaries are redrawn in election years immediately following the national census.

Why this matters: This position addresses the problem Chicago may face following the 2020 census or any decennial census. There are shifts in population density in geographic areas during any decade. The federal census numbers are used to redraw ward lines. Following the collection of census reports, the federal government must compile the data which it supplies to state and local governments. The delay together with the time occupied by the political process of redrawing ward boundaries in equal populations can result in unequal populations within a ward. It is important that each ward have comparable populations based on the most recent federal census so that all persons have equal representation.

Citizens' Right to Know

Electronic Communication and Access

LWV Chicago supports cable and other forms of communication that guarantee access and freedom of expression.

Why this matters: As telephone, television, internet, and cable services are increasingly bundled by providers, there are grave concerns about privacy and the aggregation of information about individuals and households. There are also concerns about the provision of at least a minimum number of public access channels.

Chicago Public Libraries

LWV Chicago supports adequate funding and support for central and branch libraries.

Why this matters: Libraries are local resources for keeping the residents of Chicago informed and engaged in their communities and serve as technology access points.

Government Structure

City Government

LWV Chicago has several positions governing the operation of Chicago government, including the office of the mayor, City Council and City Council procedures.

Why these positions matter: LWV Chicago's positions address specific organization and procedures of the Chicago city government which may not be addressed by other levels of the League of Women Voters.

City Planning

An LWV Chicago position calls for an agency to undertake and oversee long-range planning.

Why this matters: There is a need for planning and coordination of many aspects of Chicago. Developing economic plans that address employment, for example, require integration with education and training, transportation, etc.

Privatization

Privatization of city services requires investigation of savings and costs, with time for public comment; contracting that allows for equal access to services and equal opportunity employment; and competition that is open to public scrutiny.

Why this matters: Although new guidelines for evaluating privatization deals emerged in 2015, they had the effect of allowing net proceeds to prop up the city's operating budget, rather than improving its overall financial position. In addition, some privatization deals have led to poor services, particularly in Chicago Public Schools.

Natural Resources

Land Use

Policies call for the exclusive use of the lakefront and parks for public recreation, with pedestrian access and minimal building and adequate funding for maintenance and development. A separate policy statement opposes public funding for the construction and/or operation of a sports stadium.

Why this matters: Proposals to construct museums along the lakefront or on city park land have not fully protected public access. Chicago taxpayers continue to be saddled with debt repayments for construction of new and renovations at existing sports stadiums that date back to 2003 and are expected to persist for decades.

Social Policy

Education

LWV Chicago positions support the development and maintenance of high-quality and inclusive schools that meets the diverse needs of children across the city. Positions define school leadership teams; facilities, programs, and policies that address readiness for employment in the digital and information age and ways to improve school governance, irrespective of the type of governance. These options include authentic community engagement for facilities usage and closures as well as outside financial appointees for the Chicago Board of Education's Finance and Audit Committee. A separate position governs the funding and support of Chicago City Colleges.

Why this matters: Rich educational opportunities for all students in every part of the city can be the stepping stone to a more equitable distribution of resources in our hyper-segregated city. The current state leadership is poised to support neighborhood schools over the former efforts towards privatization and market-based competition that existed through the establishment of charter schools; LWV Chicago will want to be strong supporters of these bills. LWV Chicago also has positions that will be important to improve the governance of CPS irrespective of the method of board selection in order to achieve authentic community engagement and trustworthy financial reports.

Living Wage Requirement

Since 1997 LWV Chicago has supported the campaign for a living wage that may be adjusted for the cost of living.

Why this matters: Since 2010 Chicago has increased its minimum wage to \$12 per hour. According to new state legislation passed in February, the minimum wage will rise each year until it reaches \$15 an hour in 2025. Supporters of a wage hike contend that the change will bring thousands of Illinois residents out of poverty and raise the pay of about 1.4 million people.

Housing

Long-standing positions cover condominiums, fair housing, low and moderate-income housing, multi-family units, and housing and urban development.

Why these are important: At this time Chicago does not have a comprehensive plan to address location of affordable housing in all parts of the city. LWV Chicago's existing positions speak of coordination across departments and programs.

Violence Prevention and Gun Control

Handguns

In keeping with LWVUS and LWVIL, LWV Chicago support legislation to control the proliferation of handguns and the sale and distribution of ammunition as well as regulations for gun registration, licensing, permits and education in the safe use of firearms.

Why this matters: Despite a drop of more than 100 in the total number of murders for 2017, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported 765 murders in 2016, a rate 60% higher than in 2015 and the highest rate in the city of Chicago since 1996. Gun violence prevention was an action focus for LWVIL in 2017-2019.

Fiscal Policy

Several positions address the tax structure of local government revenue, city pension funds, the city budget and budget-making procedures.

Why this matters: Because of the so-called pension funding "ramp," the amount the city must contribute to pensions will increase by \$159 million next year, \$121 million in 2020, and so on until 2023, when the annual contribution will be \$1.1 billion greater than it was 2018. *Forbes* reports that candidates are being asked how they will find the money, whether through an amendment to the state constitution that reforms pension benefits and/or the acquisition of pension obligation bonds. A graduated income tax is an action focus for LWVIL for 2019-2020.