



PROGRAM & ACTION AGENDA 2025 – 2027

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League of Women Voters of South Carolina

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ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

OUR CORE VALUES

We are a nonpartisan political membership organization. We believe that grassroots initiatives and consensus building are the strengths of our organization. We believe that our organization models the principles of good governance. We consider well before taking action and prepare well before beginning to act. We believe that citizenship requires knowledge, as well as the ability and will to act. We believe that the responsibility of good government rests on the shoulders of its citizens. We believe that the rights of citizens at home and abroad are interdependent.

OUR HISTORY

The League of Women Voters of the United States was founded in 1920 at the final meeting of the Women's Suffrage Association that had gathered in Chicago to celebrate the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. After the 72-year struggle to win the right to vote, LWVUS was formed to urge women to use their new franchise and to become knowledgeable about political issues. In 1974 men were accorded full membership privileges.

Thirty years after the League was born, at a conference in Columbia, SC delegates from the local Leagues of Charleston (1947,) Columbia (1947,) and Spartanburg (1948) joined with representatives from Greenville and Sumter to organize the League of Women Voters of South Carolina. Official recognition for the LWVSC was forthcoming in June of 1951. Today the League serves fifteen areas in the state and has many members-at-large who reside in communities that do not have a local League at this time.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is available to men and women, adults and children, citizens, and non-citizens. Non-citizens and citizens under the age of 16 may only join as associate members but may participate in all facets of League activity except voting on official business.

The League has three organizational levels: local, state, and national. Membership at any level automatically includes all three levels. These levels are totally integrated and interdependent. In areas where there is no organized League, interested persons may join as state members-at-large.



VOTER SERVICE

League Voter Service promotes citizen participation by providing nonpartisan, objective information on governmental issues and elections through publications, voter registration drives, its VOTE411 online candidate and election guide, candidate debates, and community forums on timely topics.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The positions described herein are governmental issues chosen by the members of the South Carolina League for study, consensus, and action. The goal of studying an issue and reaching consensus among members is to formulate a League position on which to take action by advocating and lobbying in support of the position.

Program exists on all levels: local, state, and national. Members vote on adoption of proposed Program items, and on whether to continue with or drop current Program items. This is done every year at the local level, and every two years at the state and national levels. LWVSC adopts program at its biennial convention held in odd-numbered years.

LWVUS adopts program at its biennial convention held in even-numbered years.

PRINCIPLES

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States. The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, administrative, or economic discrimination. The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes that government should be responsive to the will of the people; maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems. The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination



among levels of government, effective enforcement and well-defined channels for citizen input and review.

LWVSC POSITIONS IN BRIEF

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

LWVSC supports policies that ensure fair and open elections through unbiased and equitable redistricting, encouraging voter registration and access to voting, open primaries, and use of voting equipment that ensures that voters can participate without any undue obstacle and produces election results that can be verified as accurately reflecting the intent of voters. Specific positions address redistricting, voter registration/voter access, and election management.

EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

LWVSC supports development and monitoring of government structures, processes, and procedures that are efficient, responsive, representative, transparent and accountable; providing citizen access to, and participation in, decision-making; and a system of state and local taxation that is equitable and provides adequate revenue for public purposes. Specific positions address transparency and accountability, the General Assembly, executive and regulatory, judiciary, constitutional revision, local government and home rule, and state and local taxation.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN SERVICES

LWVSC supports the creation of a nurturing, protective and supportive environment for all residents, regardless of race or gender. Important public services that contribute to that environment include education, health care, protection of children's rights, and the criminal justice system. We support a public state-supported education at all levels which is high quality, effective, equitable, fully funded, and accountable. We affirm the right of children to protective services, safe and affordable childcare, and fair and supportive treatment when in the juvenile justice system. We support policies that will reduce the prison population and provide better services to inmates that will help to rehabilitate them when they return to the community.

Racial and Gender Equity: LWVSC supports gender and racial equity, including ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and the promotion of fairness in hiring, advancement, pay, and representation in public appointments.

Education: LWVSC supports public state-supported education at all levels that is high quality, effective, equitable, fully funded, and accountable.

Health Care: LWVSC, in conformity with LWVUS policy, supports provision of a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost for all South Carolina residents. Health Insurance should be expanded to cover all South Carolinians. The state should participate fully in federal programs to provide health care insurance and services. LWVSC strongly supports access to sexual and reproductive health care and autonomy of decision-making.



Protection of Children's Rights: LWVSC supports programs and policies that ensure quality services, personnel, financing, and training at all levels of government in order to meet the needs of children and families, and a juvenile justice system that has as its primary purpose the rehabilitation, safety and well-being of the offender.

Criminal Justice: LWVSC supports improvements in function and oversight of the Department of Correction to promote the rehabilitation, safety, and well-being of inmates, with attention to offenders' responsibility to the community and preparing them for their return to the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

LWVSC supports promoting an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, habitat preservation, waste management and water resources, sustainable agricultural programs and practices and a balanced approach to transportation and growth management planning.

Natural Resources: LWVSC supports promotion of an environment that is beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, habitat preservation, waste management and water resources and sustainable agricultural programs and practices.

Transportation: LWVSC supports local, regional, and coordinated multi-modal transportation services that efficiently and economically meet community needs and enhance planned growth, but do not adversely affect the environment.

LWVSC POSITIONS 2025-2027

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

LWVSC supports policies that ensure fair and open elections through unbiased and equitable redistricting, encouraging voter registration and access to voting, open primaries, and use of voting equipment that ensures that voters can participate without any undue obstacle and produces election results that can be verified as accurately reflecting the intent of voters.

Redistricting

LWVSC supports implementing the League's one-person, one-vote position by the following:

1. Drawing new district lines at all levels following the decennial census to reflect strict anti-gerrymandering standards, including:
 - a. Prompt judicial review.
 - b. Equality of population size among districts.



- c. District lines that minimize division of established election districts for precincts, cities, and counties.
 - d. Compact and contiguous districts.
 - e. Rejection of district lines drawn for the purpose of advantage or disadvantage to any political party, incumbent, or any other person or group.
 - f. Rejection of lines that dilute the voting strength of any minority.
 - g. Rejection of the use of addresses of incumbents, political affiliation of registered voters, previous election returns, or demographic information other than population as criteria for redistricting and reapportionment.
2. Redrawing precinct lines to conform to South Carolina House and Senate district lines after each redistricting, with a state-mandated minimum and maximum number of voters per precinct.
 3. Creating a nonpartisan and independent reapportionment commission to reapportion the South Carolina House, Senate, and Congressional districts.

Voter Registration/Voter Access

LWVSC supports ensuring access to registration and voting for all citizens in its work to support an inclusive democracy by:

1. Continued implementation of the National Voter Registration Act.
2. Creating clear and accessible registration procedures and access to early mail or in-person voting for all citizens eligible to vote, including those with disabilities.
3. Ensuring that persons imprisoned and awaiting trial, and those convicted of misdemeanors, are granted absentee registration, and voting privileges, ensuring that voters are not denied registration for claiming the occupation "student" - students should be allowed to choose their place of residence for the purpose of registering to vote.
4. Providing for simplified transfer of registration within the state.
5. Providing easy and secure online, mail, and in person voter registration procedures.
6. Developing and publishing uniform, non-discriminatory rules for moving registered voters to the inactive rolls and making the list of voters classified as inactive publicly available no later than 60 days prior to an election.
7. Removing the requirement for a witness signature on absentee by mail ballots.
8. Defining technical deficiencies in ballots consistently and notifying all voters whose ballots are received with technical deficiencies that their ballots could be rejected; providing an opportunity for those voters to cure the defect so that their ballot would be counted.

9. Providing ballot drop boxes at secure locations during the full period when in-person voting is permitted.
10. Permitting same-day registration.
11. Providing automatic voter registration with driver's license.
12. Join National Popular Vote Compact.
13. Allowing universal no-excuse early voting.
14. Allowing part-time poll workers.
15. Prohibiting discriminatory practices related to polling places, including impediments to access through inaccessible location, frequent changes of location, insufficient staffing, insufficient or defective voting systems, lack of equitable polling places and hours of operation or inadequate provision for access and privacy for persons with disabilities.

Background/Action In 2023, the positions were amended to incorporate language aligned with LWVSC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy.

Election Management

LWVSC supports ensuring that elections result in fair and transparent outcomes by:

1. Giving rule-making authority to the State Election Commission to standardize election procedures statewide.
2. Retain the State Election Commission as an independent non-partisan agency.
3. Combining local voter registration boards and election commissions.
4. Providing clear and understandable statement of ballot issues.
5. Providing for proper conduct of elections through:
 - a. Instituting authority to poll watch in elections for a ballot issue.
 - b. Mandatory training and adequate remuneration for poll workers.
 - c. Mandatory wearing of uniform identifying badges by all poll workers.
 - d. Mandatory uniform identification of polling places.
6. Moving the primary date closer to date of general election.
7. Using the primary method of nomination for all certified state, county and national candidates with state and counties administering and bearing cost of all such primaries.
8. Extend the 50%-plus 1 rule to all state and local primaries and general elections for single seats.

9. Adopting election systems that ensure better proportional representation of the varied segments of our voting population, within South Carolina, by city, county or statewide, as appropriate. Within this goal we will seek: to achieve better election and/or influence for minorities and women in proportion to their numbers in the population, to reduce election costs in part by eliminating costly runoff elections, to lessen polarization among segments of the population, to increase voter turnout and to provide more opportunity for third party candidates.
10. Encouraging and supporting local communities to develop their own election system for local elections, after careful examination of the demography of its community. Systems which may be considered include Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), Limited Voting, Cumulative Voting, more use of at-large seats, and others. An explanation of the method used must be provided.
11. Implementing automated systems of voting from a statewide list approved by the S.C. State Elections Commission to standardize voting procedures, lessen voter confusion, increase the accuracy of the count, and ensure that all provisional ballots cast by voters lacking Help America Vote Act-required ID are counted by using any of the HAVA provisos.
12. Protecting the integrity of the electoral process in the way elections are conducted by:
 - a. Purchasing only voting systems that include a paper ballot. Acceptable machines must ensure protection of privacy, allow the voter to verify his/her vote, and provide a reliable basis for a recount if required.
 - b. Mandatory random testing of voting systems during every election.
13. Independently verifying the results of all federal elections and elections of statewide officials before results are certified.
14. Continuing the practice of open primaries in which any registered voter may participate in the primary of either party.
15. Having election and voting systems that are candidate-neutral (for example, using randomized candidate order on ballots where practical).

Related national positions: Representative government (Voting rights, election process)

Background/Action A study of alternative election systems was passed at the LWVSC 2003 convention and the number 11 support position was adopted by the state board at its March 2005 meeting. In 2007, with completion of a two-year study of electronic voting in SC, Section 9.f. was amended and Section 12 was added. In 2015 number 2 was amended to refer to an “independent” rather than a “bipartisan” commission. In 2017 the Electoral Democracy section was reorganized to group positions under appropriate subheads and position 18 was clarified. Number 10 was added to support rules for classifying voters as inactive. In 2019, the convention approved a concurrence with a Florida League position supporting open primaries. Items 7-15 were added to Voter Registration/Voter Access section at the 2021 state convention. These items are included in the National League’s campaign to increase voter access to the polls. In 2023, language was improved, and obsolete 12c, requiring the availability of voting systems’ source code, was eliminated. At the 2025 convention, item 15 was added on the basis that it is supported by the LWVUS “Voter Representation/Electoral Systems” position and provides an

enhanced basis for advocacy for voting and electoral systems that do not provide an inherent advantage or disadvantage to any electoral candidate.

EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

LWVSC supports development and monitoring of government structures, processes, and procedures that are efficient, responsive, representative, transparent and accountable; providing citizen access to, and participation in, decision-making; and a system of state and local taxation that is equitable and provides adequate revenue for public purposes.

Transparency and Accountability

LWVSC supports positions that ensure accountability of public officials through:

1. Appointments by the executive and legislative branches of state government that:
 - a. Are based on qualifications for the specific appointment.
 - b. Ensure representative government by including people of different ethnicity, gender, ages, sexual orientations, religions, and abilities.
 - c. Are free from financial or professional conflicts of interest.
2. Prohibition on former legislators lobbying on the floor.
3. Prohibiting former legislators from serving as paid lobbyists in the legislature for a period of two years after they leave office.
4. Restricting legislators from practicing before boards and commissions which are appointed and/or funded and/or regulated by the General Assembly.
5. Full disclosure of retainers by legislators.
6. An audit process that includes the following:
 - a. An independent state agency that audits state government programs.
 - b. Retaining the Legislative Audit Council under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly.
 - c. Audit and oversight of state government programs by the legislature, randomly and periodically, and/or in response to special need in order to determine efficiency/cost effectiveness, compliance with state and federal statutes and regulations, how programs compare to similar programs in other states, customer/citizen satisfaction/politeness, equity (treating all citizens equally), and results.
 - d. Compliance review for audited agencies and programs by the Governor's Office since restructuring has placed more agency accountability under executive control.
7. The use of qualified administrative law judges, selected by the Legislature, to review agency decisions.

Related National Positions: Representative Government (Citizen's Right to Know/Participation)

General Assembly

LWVSC supports making the General Assembly more efficient, effective, accountable, and responsive through:

1. Provision for roll call votes on most bills other than congratulatory and honorary resolutions.
2. Subsistence pay for members of the General Assembly only when present.
3. Pre-session orientation and organization for the Senate (as in House).
4. Some limitation on the number of consecutive terms a Speaker of the House can serve. However, a Speaker should be permitted to serve at least 3 consecutive terms.
5. Proper staffing and financial support of state agencies mandated by law or regulations to carry out and enforce the provisions of state and federal laws and regulations.
6. A Committee on Committees to assign members to committees.
7. Modification of the Senate committee assignment procedures to include criteria other than just seniority.
8. Parallel jurisdiction for committees in the House and Senate.
9. Full publicizing of all committee meetings year- round in a timely manner, with at least 24 hours' notice, giving date, time, and place, including at www.scstatehouse.gov.

Executive and Regulatory

LWVSC supports more effective implementation of state policies through:

1. Organizational changes that best fit the primary criteria of greater client responsiveness, combining related functions, and reducing duplication of services in any further consolidation or reorganization of state agencies and departments. Greater political accountability, cost savings, and better provision for citizen input into policy and management should also be considered.
- 2(a). Appointment by the governor of offices that are primarily administrative or functional in nature, currently including the offices of Secretary of State, Comptroller General and Adjutant General.
- 2(b). Direct election by voters of offices that have substantial policy-making authority and/or that serve particular constituencies, currently including the offices of Superintendent of Education, Attorney General, and Commissioner of Agriculture.
- 2(c). Establishment by the General Assembly of appropriate required qualifications of educational, professional and experience-related accomplishment for each of the constitutional offices (*i.e.*,

Superintendent of Education, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Treasurer, Comptroller General, Commissioner of Agriculture and Adjutant General).

3. Giving the governor the power to remove a gubernatorial board appointee for cause (which should be stated) without requiring consent of the legislature.

Background/Action: A study of the selection of constitutional officers was approved at the 2023 convention, and the replacement of prior item 2 with new items 2(a), 2(b) and 2(c) reflected the conclusions of the study and was approved at the 2025 convention. With respect to item 2(c), some examples of appropriate required qualifications for offices are the superintendent of education having an education degree at the master's and/or doctorate level as well as substantial experience with K-12 public education and the attorney general being an attorney in good standing with the South Carolina bar.

Judiciary

LWVSC supports a diverse, independent, unified judicial system through:

1. Evaluation of all judicial candidates including magistrates by a judicial nominating committee made up of persons with professional expertise in the law who are not currently serving as legislators or other public officials.
2. Substantial weight given by the judicial nominating committee to ethics decisions within the judicial branch.
3. Election of all judges other than magistrates by the members of the General Assembly, from a list of all qualified candidates provided by the evaluation committee.
4. Gubernatorial appointment of magistrates, from a list of all qualified applicants.
5. Establishment of a judicial commission at a statewide level for the discipline and removal of judges at all levels.

Background/Action In 2023, this position was amended to incorporate language aligned with LWVSC's DEI policy and was modified and expanded to incorporate the results of a 2013-2014 study not previously included.

Constitutional Revision

LWVSC supports improved procedures for revising the Constitution, including:

1. Article-by-article revision as a permanent optional method to amend the Constitution.
2. Removal of the requirement that Constitutional amendments be returned to the General Assembly for ratification after approval by the electorate.

Local Government and Home Rule

LWVSC supports effective and empowered local government, as established in the S.C. Constitution, Chapter 8, Section 17, which states that “the provisions of this Constitution and all laws concerning local government shall be liberally construed in their favor. Powers, duties, and responsibilities granted local government subdivisions by this Constitution and by law shall include those fairly implied and not prohibited by this Constitution.” These powers, duties and responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Providing for additional options for the structure, methods of election and/or appointment and financing of local government bodies, including councils and commissions, in Accordance with Article VIII of the S.C. Constitution (Home Rule).
2. Creating annexation regulations for municipalities that:
 - a. Permit city-initiated annexation. A referendum of resident voters in the area to be annexed shall take place only if there is a petition against the annexation.
 - b. Permit unilateral city-initiated annexation in the case of enclaves.
 - c. Provide for annexation by petition of the property owners in the area proposed to be annexed or by a combination wherein residents who are registered voters are given equal standing as petitioners with property owners.
 - d. Establish procedures and criteria for annexation.
 - e. Address the disposition of the property of public service and special purpose districts in annexed areas.
1. Permitting consolidation as an alternative to annexation.
2. Placing no constitutional limit on local debt authorization other than that the debt be incurred in pursuit of law.
3. Requiring that changes in the structures of the school board and/or consolidating, splitting, or redrawing school district lines should be subject to a referendum by the voters in the affected school district(s).
4. Empowering local governments to regulate issues that are primarily local.

Background/Action The 1999 convention authorized the board to combine positions that were formerly under Apportionment, Constitutional Revision, Election Laws & Procedures, Local Government, Restructuring of State Government and SC Legislative Structure and Procedures into a single umbrella position, which was approved at the 2000 LWVSC Council meeting. A review was conducted beginning in 2003 on the support position on initiative and referendum as a method of revising the Constitution. This was deleted as a support position at the 2005 convention. A review of the Structure of State Government section of the STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT was approved at Convention 2009. Item #4 under EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT is a result of consensus based on a state LWV study of school district structure and governance and was adopted at convention in 2011. Item #1 was amended to add “and/or appointment” and “including councils and

commissions” at Convention 2019. At Council 2020, the introductory statement was amended from “LWVSC supports home rule or granting local governments the powers they need to effectively serve the needs of their citizens. Important aspects of home rule for counties, cities, and school districts include: “to read “LWVSC supports effective and empowered local government, as established in the S. C. Constitution, Chapter 8, Section 17, which states that “the provisions of this Constitution and all laws concerning local government shall be liberally construed in their favor. Powers, duties, and responsibilities granted local government subdivisions by this Constitution and by law shall include those fairly implied and not prohibited by this Constitution.” These powers, duties and responsibilities include but are not limited to: “Also at Council 2020, Item #6 was added. At 2021 state convention editorial changes were made to clarify the definition of diversity and a few other minor editorial changes/clarifications.

State and Local Taxation

LWVSC supports a system of taxation that is equitable and ensures adequate revenue through:

1. Comprehensive tax reform rather than piecemeal changes in the tax system, based on a review undertaken by a commission or other body that is broadly representative, has access to adequate support staff or technical resources, and that makes clear and ample provision for public input.
2. Shared responsibility for financing education between state and local resources so as to ensure access to quality education for all students while maintaining a significant local role in supporting and managing the public schools.
3. Providing additional options for financing local government bodies.
4. Continued state oversight of local property tax assessment to ensure that assessment is done by qualified assessors and that reassessment is undertaken frequently enough to ensure equitable distribution of the property tax burden among property owners.
5. Making the sales tax less regressive.
6. Ensuring that any expanded property tax relief should be state-funded and directed primarily to low-income households through means testing.
7. Ensuring that any expanded property tax relief should be state-funded and directed primarily to low-income households through means testing.
8. Revising the present regulations and practices governing use-value (rather than market value) classification for farm and forest property in order to balance the desire for green space and to protect lower income households with the need to prevent abuse and excessive revenue loss.
9. Monitoring the use of property tax incentives for industry to balance the benefits, the costs, and the risks associated with these business location packages. Citizens value industrial development that brings jobs, tax revenue and other benefits. However, they are concerned that development also creates costs to existing residents and firms, service demands on local governments, pressures on infrastructure, congestion, and sometimes environmental damage. County councils should continue to play a lead role in economic development in collaboration

with other interested parties, including school boards, municipalities, county economic development boards and the State Department of Commerce. Future contracts should include provisions for repaying some of the benefits received if the firm does not honor its commitment in terms of capital investment and job creation.

Background/Action The state and local taxation position was crafted from positions under constitutional revision, education, and local government at the 1995 convention. Two successive conventions authorized a study and consensus process, which took place in 1999- 2001 and 2001-03 on sales tax issues, business tax incentives, and property tax issues and was approved at the 2003 convention. The position on initiative and referendum as a method of revising the Constitution was deleted at the 2005 convention. A review of the Structure of State Government section of the STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT was approved at Convention 2009. Item #4 under EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT is a result of consensus based on a state LWV study of school district structure and governance and was adopted at convention in 2011.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN SERVICES

LWVSC supports the creation of a nurturing, protective and supportive environment for all its residents, regardless of race or gender. Important public services that contribute to that environment include education, health care, protection of children's rights, and the criminal justice system. We support a public state-supported education at all levels which is high quality, effective, equitable, fully funded, and accountable. We affirm the right of children to protective services, safe and affordable childcare, and fair and supportive treatment when in the juvenile justice system. We support policies that will reduce the prison population and provide better services to inmates that will help to rehabilitate them when they return to the community.

Racial and Gender Equity

LWVSC supports gender and racial equity, including ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, and the promotion of fairness in hiring, advancement, pay, and representation in public appointments.

Related national position: Social Policy

Education

LWVSC supports public state-supported education at all levels that is high quality, effective, equitable, inclusive, fully funded, and accountable.

GOVERNANCE

Early Childhood (EC) through grade 12

1. An inclusive State Board of Education, appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the General Assembly, to include two members from each Congressional district. At least three appointees must be teachers, one each from the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

2. Non-partisan election of local board of education members for four-year terms.
3. Formulation and publication of educational policy and goals by state and local boards as a basis for selection and evaluation of content, methods and organizational patterns reflecting these goals and encouraging innovation and experimentation.
4. Consolidation of services and programs of small schools and consolidation of small school districts when educationally feasible.
5. Changes in the structures of the school board and/or consolidating, splitting, or redrawing school district lines should be subject to a referendum by the voters in the affected school district(s).

Post-Secondary

6. Legislative election and gubernatorial appointment of institutional governing boards broadly representative of the state population as to race and gender.
7. Application of the rules of dual office holding to institutional governing boards.
8. Involvement of the Commission on Higher Education and the institutions in statewide planning and assessment; periodic outside evaluation as a further measure of accountability.

Adult Education

9. Governance and oversight of adult education programs by the State Department of Education, with programs administered by local school districts, regional adult education technical assistance centers, community organizations, and faith-based organizations.
10. Adult education programs which are accessible to residents throughout each county in South Carolina.

FUNDING

All Levels (Early Childhood - 12, Post-Secondary)

12. Assumption by the state of the greatest share of financial responsibility for public education, fully funding public schools and being held responsible and accountable for the funding, allowing some local initiative and keeping local taxes (EC - 12) and tuition (post-secondary) within equitable bounds.
13. Faculty compensation competitive with neighboring states, and state appropriations sufficient to meet state mandated increases in salaries and fringe benefits.
14. State aid to local districts for school construction and to post-secondary institutions through financing instructional facilities with general obligation bonds.

Early Childhood - 12

15. State grants at a level sufficient to maintain effective public education, supplemented by variable local grants, working toward equal educational opportunity for all. Support evidence-based early literacy programs to ensure that children reach school ready to read.
16. Administration of funds decided on the local level with strong state guidelines, ensuring fiscal effectiveness.
17. Protection of funds legally designated for specific programs.
18. Accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as mandatory for all schools using public funds.
19. Amending the state constitution to prohibit the use of state funds for direct or indirect support of private education through tax credits, direct payments, school vouchers, or any other means.

Post-Secondary

20. Indexing of in-state tuition based on the actual cost of education, the state bearing 80% of cost and the student 20% at all institutions, while allowing individual institutions to set out of-state tuition at 200% or more of in-state tuition and fees.

Adult Education

21. Adequate State funding to increase the percentage of full-time teachers in high school diploma programs and career transition specialists for students in adult education programs.
22. Increasing the per student allocation for adult education students (ages 17-21 years) in diploma programs to an amount that is adequate to ensure quality, and which compares favorably to the per student allocation for those enrolled in public high schools.

EFFECTIVE EDUCATION

In addition to sound principles of governance and funding as conducive to effective education, LWVSC also supports:

Early Childhood - 12

23. The provisions of the Education Finance Act (EFA) and the Education Improvement Act (EIA) which provide compulsory (K - 12), effective, equitable, inclusive and accountable education to all students.
24. Effective partnerships between schools and parents, the community, and business.
25. Ample variation in curriculum to meet individual educational needs of all students.
26. Continued offering of full day kindergarten, expansion of full day 4-K to all areas of the state, and expansion of pre-school with small class size, low pupil-teacher ratio, aides and developmentally appropriate programs, and with parental choice of full day or half day.

27. Offering to educators a wide variety of support before and during evaluation.
28. Elimination of corporal punishment, with the promotion of more effective and positive methods of discipline.
29. Early identification of students who are at risk for dropping out of school.
30. Recognizing that the teacher is the most important school-based component of academic achievement, school districts should implement a comprehensive teacher evaluation. The fair and comprehensive evaluation system should occur regularly and be a clearly communicated process: The system should include the following:
 - a. Offer educators a wide variety of support before and during evaluation.
 - b. Assure that all teachers are evaluated on a regular basis.
 - c. Include three or more qualitative rating categories to identify and retain effective teachers (for example, categories of: Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement, rather than letter grades).
 - d. Include student progress as one of the factors used for rating teacher effectiveness.
 - e. Use clearly defined, widely accepted standards, and consistent, well-trained evaluators.
 - f. Use teachers in developing and implementing the evaluation system.
 - g. Provide feedback to teachers to help them develop skills and support decisions for retention, dismissal, and assignments.
 - h. Be equitably and fully funded across the state's public-school systems.

Post-Secondary

31. The establishment and expansion of research programs to include those having a direct, positive impact on economic development, education, health, or welfare in this state.

Adult Education

32. Availability of a variety of adult education programs and classes (such as literacy, English as a second language, pre-GED and GED preparation, high school diploma, computer literacy, career readiness), as well as on-line and virtual learning programs, to meet respective needs of South Carolina's diverse population.
33. Local adult education partnerships with higher education and technical education institutions, as well as businesses, community organizations, and other government entities to assist in carrying out the mission of adult education.
34. Available child development facilities and care for children of adult education parents while they are attending adult education classes.
35. Available, affordable transportation assistance to/ from adult education sites for adult education students.

36. Access to adult education classes in a wide variety of community locations, including State Department of Corrections facilities, city and county jails, vocational rehabilitation centers, and One Stop Centers.

All levels (EC - 12, Post-Secondary, Adult Education)

37. Effective administration, leadership, and management, with strict quality controls.

Public Charter Schools

38. Constitutionality: Charter Schools should be under the control of publicly elected or publicly appointed school officials. They may receive public funding only if they meet constitutional requirements to qualify as public schools. They must be non-religious and non-sectarian in programs, admissions policies, and employment practices.
39. Equal Access: Charter Schools must maintain racial and ethnic balance among students unless imbalances are justified by a special program. They must not practice discrimination based on disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, need for special education, or economic status. Free transportation must be provided within the territorial jurisdiction of the Charter School. There should be no requirements for parental participation or support which might limit access for minority or disadvantaged students.
40. Accountability: Charter Schools must be accountable in terms of stated learning objectives, methods of assessment, and reporting of assessment results. They must regularly report to the public on the use of funds. The South Carolina Public Charter School District must be the approving body for charter school applications but there should be an appeals process for a denied or revoked Charter School application.
41. Civics Education: The League supports comprehensive civics education in middle and high school developed through the state and local review and development process for social studies curricula.

Related national positions: Social Policy, Meeting Basic Human Needs

Background/Action Adult Education positions were studied in 2005-2007 and adopted in 2007. Item #6 under GOVERNANCE is based on a state LWV study of school district structure and governance and was adopted at convention in 2011. Item #30 under Effective Education is the result of consensus based on a statewide LWV study of evaluation and retention of effective teachers in public schools in SC and was adopted at the 2013 state convention. In 2015 number 2 was amended to provide for public election of the Secretary of Education. The title "Charter Schools" was amended to read "Public Charter Schools. In 2015, number 40 was amended to refer to the South Carolina Public Charter School District. In 2017, number 2 was amended to provide for appointment of the Secretary of Education and to describe minimum qualifications for the position. In 2017 Number 19 was amended to specify forms of financial assistance for private schools not supported by the League. At the 2021 state convention Item #1 was amended to have State Board of Education appointed solely by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Item #41 was also added to support comprehensive civics education in schools. In 2023, these positions were amended to incorporate language aligned with LWVSC's DEI policy. In 2025, item 2 (which related to the selection of the superintendent of education) was deleted as a in connection with the conclusions of the 2023-2025 constitutional officers study. That issue is

now covered in items 2(a), 2(b) and 2(c) in the section “Effective and Accountable Government – Executive and Regulatory”.

Health Care

LWVSC supports the availability of equitable, inclusive quality health care at an affordable cost to all South Carolina residents. Health insurance should be expanded to cover all South Carolinians. The state should participate fully in federal programs to provide health care insurance and services. The LWVSC strongly supports access to sexual and reproductive health care and autonomy of decision-making.

1. Support for a basic level of equitable, inclusive quality care has been affirmed by the LWVUS. LWVSC supports access to this basic level of quality health care, which should include, at a minimum, preventive care, mental health care, adequate access in rural areas, prescription drug coverage, contributions (e.g., premiums, deductibles, and co-pays) based on income, and access to children’s health care.
2. LWVUS favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes. Until the time that this goal is met, the LWVUS supports a combination of private and public sector insurance or alternatively administration of health insurance by a combination of governments at the federal, state, and local levels. LWVSC believes that South Carolina should help to ensure coverage of its citizens by expanding Medicaid or similar federal programs to the extent feasible. As a lesser priority, the state should encourage insurers to offer more affordable options and support portability of insurance plans.
3. The LWVSC strongly supports reproductive rights, including family planning, access to abortion and sex education. The LWVSC affirms the LWVUS position on reproductive rights and accepts the definition of reproductive and sexual rights promulgated by Amnesty International at the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development: “Sex and reproductive health rights, including access to sexual and reproductive health care and information as well as autonomous sexual and reproductive decision making, are human rights. These rights are universal, indivisible, and undeniable. These rights are grounded in other essential rights including the right to health free from discrimination, the right not to be subjected to torture or ill treatment, the right to determine the number and spacing of one’s children, and the right to be free from sexual violence.”
4. LWVSC supports programs to address lifestyle health issues such as food deserts, nutritional education, physical education and activity, access to green spaces, gun safety and violence prevention, obesity, and discouraging the use of tobacco products (including vaping).

Related national position: Health Care

Background/Action A study of health care was approved at the 2015 convention and the consensus position was approved in 2017. In 2023, these positions were amended to incorporate language aligned with LWVSC’s DEI policy.

Protection of Children's Rights

LWVSC supports funding adequate personnel, facilities, and training at all levels of government in order to meet the needs of children and their families, and a juvenile justice system that has as its primary purpose the rehabilitation, safety and well-being of the offender.

1. Expansion of the supply of affordable licensed and quality childcare for all who need it in order to increase access to employment, to prevent and reduce poverty, and to better prepare children for a lifetime of learning, while keeping it affordable for families.
 - a. The state should require that all childcare homes in the state that are regulated by the SC Department of Social Services (SCDSS) meet, at a minimum, licensing regulations.
 - b. The state should adopt a system that rates levels of quality in a manner more reflective of quality and more easily understood by policy makers and public.
 - c. SCDSS childcare center licensing regulations should be changed to include limitations on group size (the number of children in a room) and lower child-to staff ratios.
 - d. The state should initiate a campaign to inform employers about the benefits of employer-supported childcare, and the tax credits available to them.
 - e. The state should follow Head Start's lead and target a date by which all, or a portion of, childcare staff will have an Associate Degree in Early Childhood.
 - f. The state should investigate offering a state-sponsored health benefits plan to all childcare workers.
 - g. State agencies should provide childcare facilities for their employee's children.
 - h. In order for the legislature to understand the importance of these proposals and provide necessary support, efforts must be made to educate them about the importance of quality childcare.
 - i. Services and policies that ensure that all children are free from abuse and neglect.
 - j. Services and policies that ensure children's physical, emotional, educational and health needs are met.
 - k. Services and policies that ensure timely, permanent, and appropriate placement for children in State custody and ensure timely placement in pre-adoptive homes.
2. The Children's Policy of South Carolina (Section 20-7-20 of the Children's Code) which consists of the following:
 - a. A children's policy is hereby established by this state.
 - b. This policy shall be interpreted in conjunction with all relevant laws and regulations and shall apply to all children who have need of services including, but not limited to, those mentally, socially, emotionally, physically, developmentally, culturally, educationally, and economically disadvantaged or handicapped, those dependent, neglected, abused or

exploited, and those who by their circumstance or action violate the laws of the state and are found to be in need of treatment or rehabilitation.

- c. It shall be the policy of this state to concentrate on the prevention of children's problems as the most important strategy that can be planned and implemented on behalf of children and their families. The state shall encourage community involvement in the provision of children's services including, as an integral part, local government public and private voluntary groups, public and private non-profit groups, and private-for-profit groups in order to encourage and provide innovative strategies for children's services. To maximize resources in providing services to children in need, all agencies providing services to children shall develop methods to coordinate their services and resources. For children with multiple needs, the furtherance of this policy requires all children's services agencies to recognize that their jurisdiction in meeting these children's needs is not mutually exclusive. Support the implementation of an automated system for child support enforcement.
 - d. When children or their families request help, state and local government resources shall be utilized to complement community efforts to help meet the needs of children by aiding in the prevention and resolution of their problems. The state shall direct its efforts first to strengthen and encourage family life as the most appropriate environment for the care and nurturing of children. To this end, the state shall assist and encourage families to utilize all available resources. For children in need of services, care and guidance, the state shall secure those services as are needed to serve the emotional, mental, and physical welfare of children and the best interest of the community, preferably in their homes or the least restrictive environment possible. When children must be placed in care away from their homes, the state shall ensure that they are protected against any harmful effects resulting from the temporary or permanent inability of parents to provide care and protection for their children. It is the policy of this state to reunite the child with its family in a timely manner, whether the child has been placed in the care of the state voluntarily. When children must be permanently removed from their homes, they shall be placed in adoptive homes so that they may become members of a family by legal adoption or, absent that possibility, other permanent settings.
 - e. The children's policy provided for in this article shall be implemented through the cooperate efforts of state, county and municipal legislation, judicial and executive branches, as well as other public and private resources. Where resources are limited, services shall be targeted to those children in greatest need.
 - f. In order to carry out this policy each state agency, department, institution, committee and commission which is concerned or responsible for children shall submit, as a part of its annual budget request, a comprehensive statement of how its program contributed to the implementation of this policy. This statement shall include, but not be limited to, a listing of programs and how they are placed in priority and a summary of the expenses incurred for the administration of children's services.
3. A juvenile justice system that:
- a. has as its primary purpose the rehabilitation, safety, and well-being of the offender.

- b. promotes the juvenile's understanding of the harm done and his/her responsibility to make amends to the victim and the community, emphasizes alternatives to detention or commitment, and promotes the protection of the community and the juvenile's successful re-entry into the community.
- c. includes prevention and early intervention programs, programs that are age and gender appropriate, a variety of services including mental health, counseling and vocational and educational services, and family and community involvement, including positive parenting programs.
- d. has adequate funding and appropriately trained staff for programs and frequent and thorough oversight and evaluation of staff, programs, and facilities, both public and private.
- e. ensures fair and impartial treatment of all offenders and early assessment of the needs of the juveniles.
- f. reserves the option of charging juveniles as adults, particularly the younger ones, for the most heinous crimes and only as a last resort.

Background/Action LWVSC conventions in 1995 and 1997 called for revisiting and revising an older position on child welfare that had been adopted in the 1970s. A revised draft was offered at the 1999 convention, but delegates voted to retain the existing Child Welfare position until local Leagues could study and respond to the proposed revision. The LWVSC Board approved revised wording and agreed to accept the recommendation from the Child Welfare group to focus on studying childcare services in the following year. The consensus on child-care services was approved at State Council in 2002. The 2009 LWVSC convention expanded Item #4 to specify that, for a child in state custody, placement should be appropriate and in the best interest of the child. In 2015 "educational" was added to the needs specified in number 3. In 2002-3, a task force studied Juvenile Justice and recommended that we concur with the Colorado League position. The approval of this position was completed in November 2003 and "Juvenile Justice" was added to the corrections position. In 2015 Criminal and Juvenile Justice were separated and in 2019 Juvenile Justice joined Child Welfare under the umbrella position of Protection of Children's Rights.

Related national positions: Social Policy, Meeting Basic Human Needs

Criminal Justice

LWVSC supports improvements in function and oversight of the Department of Corrections to include attention to the offender's responsibility to the community and his/her return to the community. These policies should include:

1. Court commitment policies that encourage utilization of alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders.
2. Efforts to reduce the anticipated prison population through the utilization of various equitable alternatives to incarceration, which include: Pre-trial intervention (PTI) programs; Pre-sentence investigations (PSI); Youthful Offender Act provisions; shock incarceration; day treatment programs; community treatment programs for drug and alcohol offenders; weekend/overnight/home detention; residential and nonresidential restitution programs.

3. The diversion of mentally handicapped and mentally ill persons to community treatment service.
4. Full funding for rehabilitation, re-entry, pre-release, and work release programs that facilitate the inmate's re-entry into the community as a productive citizen.
5. Prison industry programs that enable inmates to contribute to or support the costs of their incarceration and prepare them for post-prison employment.
6. Access to education and giving credit for successful completion of academic, vocational, or technical education courses toward reducing an inmate's term of incarceration.
7. The inclusion of successful completion of academic, vocational, or technical education courses to be credited toward the reduction of an inmate's term of incarceration.
8. A requirement that state human service agencies incorporate services to the inmate population and their families in their agency plans.
9. A mandatory cost-impact review for any legislation that would affect the inmate population.
10. The construction of regionally sited correctional facilities and improvement of existing facilities as needed to relieve overcrowding and to adequately house increases in the prison population. Inmate labor should be used, provided that appropriate training is given to the inmates; that the inmates are paid a suitable wage for their labor, and that those involved are required to contribute a portion of their wages to their own maintenance costs, to support their families, and to pay restitution as required.
11. Decriminalization of victimless crimes as a means of reducing the prison population.
12. Illegal drug use should be considered a public health issue. Drug use and addiction should be addressed by substance abuse treatment and education programs instead of incarceration.
13. Frequent and thorough oversight and evaluation of staff, programs, and facilities, both public and private.

Related national position: Meeting Basic Human Needs

Background/Action: Adopted in 1979, the list of ways to reduce prison population was expanded in 1992. The list of positions was reprioritized at the direction of the 1997 convention. In 1999, the title of this position was changed from "Correction" to Criminal Justice" as more appropriate for its content. Item #10 under Adult Offenders was adopted by concurrence at the 2011 State League Convention, based on a study of illegal drug use by the Charleston League. In 2015 Criminal and Juvenile Justice were separated and in 2019 Juvenile Justice joined Child Welfare under the umbrella position of Protection of Children's Rights. In 2023, item 2 was amended to incorporate language aligned with LWVSC's DEI policy.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

LWVSC supports promoting an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air

quality, energy, land use, habitat preservation, waste management and water resources, sustainable agricultural programs and practices and a balanced approach to transportation and growth management planning.

Natural Resources

LWVSC supports:

1. Ensuring to the citizens of South Carolina fullest possible public participation in significant state and federal decisions relative to environmental and energy matters. This should include, but is not limited to, hearings in the state capital and in all locally affected areas.
2. Ensuring that federal facilities located in South Carolina comply with state and federal environmental laws.
3. Independent safety oversight at federal or state nuclear facilities.
4. Development and implementation of state solid and hazardous waste policies that protect groundwater, air quality, human health, and native biota.
5. Strong and well-enforced coastal zone management laws and regulations to ensure preservation of areas of critical concern. The coastal zone should be given a greater level of legal protection.
6. Establishing one state governmental agency (or investing an existing agency) with the power to develop and implement energy policies that would give appropriate consideration to all energy-generating sources. The citizens of SC should be represented in this proposed energy policy-making agency.
7. An environmental impact process for South Carolina that would mirror the national process, promote our overarching goal as stated above and ensure the fullest possible public participation.
8. Changes in the state's natural resource agencies and overall management that would best meet the criteria established under #1 and #4 Structure of State Government position.
9. Establishing of criteria for membership on the DHEC board to ensure varied expertise, representation of South Carolina's varied stakeholders, and freedom from conflict of interest.
10. Promoting land use and water resource policies that manage land, water, and nature biota as finite resources and that incorporate principles of stewardship and other land use planning strategies at both the state and local level.
11. Requiring state officials to incorporate environmental compliance history as criterion for awarding permits.
12. Intentional and collaborative growth management on a county and regional basis in South Carolina. We encourage regular consultations among public agencies related to growth and development and local elected bodies—city councils, county councils, and school boards. We also encourage an open and frequent dialogue between those agencies and the general public

on growth management. We support the concept of managing growth to preserve and enhance quality of life for all residents, old and new, through the effective and coordinated use of such land use management tools as conservation easements, purchase of development rights, development impact fees, and zoning where appropriate.

Related national positions: Natural Resources (all)

Transportation

LWVSC supports:

1. Strategies that emphasize making maximum use of existing and planned roadways and provide real alternatives to the use of personal vehicles by:
 - a. Construction of conveniently located park and ride lots to facilitate carpooling and express bus service to major employment areas.
 - b. Implementation of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to encourage the use of multi-occupant travel.
 - c. More effective promotion of tax incentives to employers who encourage employees to use public transportation and/or ride share.
 - d. Use of incentives to increase the use of public transportation.
 - e. Emphasize maintenance and repair of existing roadways over new construction.
2. Consideration of pedestrians and cyclists should include:
 - a. Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly development.
 - b. Provisions for pedestrians and bicycles in planning and construction of new roadways and the retrofitting of existing roadways.
3. Provision should be made for:
 - a. Early and informed public participation in local and state transportation planning, including road construction and public transportation projects.
 - b. Public participation in evaluation processes regarding improvements/increases in services provided by local public transportation systems.
 - c. Cooperation and coordination among all state and local agencies charged with the responsibility to provide transportation services.
4. Adequate funding should be provided by:
 - a. Increasing the percentage of the state gasoline tax dedicated to funding public transportation.

- b. Increasing city/county budgets dedicated to improved/increased public transportation services.
- c. Amending state legislation to provide more options for public transportation providers to raise the local match for state and federal funding.

Background/Action The 2005 convention made editorial changes to several statements under Natural Resources. A state LWV study of water issues, particularly inter-basin water conflicts, was adopted at convention 2009. This study resulted in the publication of “Quenching our State’s Thirst: Report on the Water Resources of South Carolina.” Item #13 was the result of the adoption of concurrence with the Clemson area’s League’s study of growth management. In 2015, Number 8 was amended to refer to #1. A study of transportation was approved at the 2001 convention. This consensus position was approved in 2003 and was further amended at Convention 2007 and 2015. In 2016 the position on growth management (#13 under natural resources) was added by concurrence with a Clemson local League position. At the 2025 convention, item 9 was deleted because it related to DHEC, a state agency that was dissolved in 2024, and item 3 was revised to add state nuclear facilities (in addition to federal nuclear facilities) to the position.

LWVSC PROGRAM & ACTION PRIORITIES FOR 2025-2027

- Electoral Democracy (voter rights, access and services, redistricting, etc.)
- Education
- Health Care