



Public Policy Positions 2023-2025

Adopted by the League of Women Voters of Arizona State Convention May 21, 2023.

GOVERNMENT

During the 1960's LWVAZ adopted the following positions: AZ Executive Branch, Legislative and Congressional Redistricting and Judicial Selection and Tenure.

In the 1970's LWVAZ adopted the following positions: Arizona Election Law, Initiative and Referendum, and County Government.

In the 1980's LWVAZ adopted the following positions: Campaign Finance Reform and Arizona Corporation Commission.

In the 1990's LWVAZ adopted the following positions: Juvenile Justice.

Between 2000 and 2013, LWVAZ adopted the following positions: Election Systems Reform and a new AZ Executive Branch position.

In 2017, LWVAZ adopted a newly reorganized government positions with updated areas of voter registrations, voting options, and voting systems; and a newly adopted position on the AZ Legislative Branch.

In 2021, LWVAZ adopted by concurrence the LWV California (LWVC) Position on Criminal Justice.

ARIZONA ELECTION SYSTEMS AND LAW

- The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports an accessible system of voter registration and election participation, with uniform and standardized procedures throughout the state.
- The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes in the election system principle that "every vote should count". Providing for the broadest voter representation possible in elections should have a positive effect on voter participation.
- The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports measures to ensure the regular redistricting of Arizona legislative and congressional districts on an "equal population" basis.
- The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that the political process must be open, equitable and honest. The process must provide opportunity for maximum citizen participation as candidates, uninhibited by the costs of running a campaign. There should be limits on the size and type of campaign contributions. There should be full disclosure of contributions and expenditures to combat undue influence in the electoral and governmental processes.
- The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes in the constitutional right of the people to enact direct legislation (enacting, amending, or repealing legislative acts and amending the

Arizona Constitution).

Election Systems

The LWVAZ supports the following registration procedures, voting options, and voting systems in addition to those required under the National Voting Rights Act (VRA), Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). All registration procedures, voting options and systems should be accessible to all, easy to administer, and have appropriate security measures to prevent fraud or technology disruptions.

Voter Registration Procedures:

- Automatic registration
- Universal registration
- Permanent portable registration
- Mail-in registration
- Online registration

Voting Options:

- Early voting in person and by mail
- Traditional polling places
- Voting Centers

Voting Systems:

- The LWVAZ supports a voting system that would more accurately represent the electorate, specifically the Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) system for single seat races, and the adoption of proportional representation for multi-seat races.
 - The LWVAZ supports the monitoring of vote counting in state and local elections.
 - The LWVAZ supports increased voter education as an essential part of all elections.

Legislative and Congressional Redistricting

The LWVAZ supports:

- The retention of an independent commission to redistrict legislative and congressional districts at regular intervals, subject to judicial review. The Legislature itself should not be the reapportioning agency.
- Legislative districts that provide equitable representation, accountability and responsibility, competitive elections, and close contact with constituents. (Footnote: To allow for greater flexibility, this position was amended on March 5, 2005, by removing the words "single member." As background information, three points were made: 1) impacts may differ in rural and urban districts, 2) the change is neither an automatic endorsement for multi-member districts nor an automatic opposition to single member districts, 3) even members who strongly favor multi-member districts often do so only when such districts are accompanied by other electoral changes.)

Campaign Finance

The LWVAZ supports:

- An income tax check-off to provide partial funding of legislative elections through the subsidy of some television time for issue discussion by ballot qualified candidates.
 - A requirement for complete financial disclosure by candidates for public office.
 - A cap on gifts to public officials, and reporting of all gifts.
- Prohibiting elected officials lobbying for remuneration of any kind for at least one year after leaving office.
- Prohibiting elected officials from using surplus campaign funds for personal use, or from taking them along when leaving office.
- All government agencies being required to report all their lobbying activities, expenditures and gifts to public officials.

Initiative & Referendum

The LWVAZ supports:

- The requirement that only qualified electors (registered voters) may sign any initiative, referendum or recall petition.
- The reduction of the required number of signatures on a statutory initiative petition to qualify placing it on the ballot from ten percent to not more than eight percent of the votes cast for governor at the last gubernatorial election.
- The amendment of the constitution to limit the power of the Legislature to repeal or amend the initiative or referendum measures by means such as requiring more than just majority approval, or setting a minimum time limit before the Legislature can act on such measures, or some other limitation short of complete elimination of power.
- The disclosure of financial contributions to committees supporting and opposing an initiative and referendum.

ARIZONA EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports measures to strengthen the executive branch of state government, and to integrate its administration by centralizing authority and responsibility in the governor's office.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that a clear line of succession in the Executive Branch of the State of Arizona should be more obvious to the public than it is in the current system where the Secretary of State assumes the role of Governor in times of absence, removal, resignation, death or other such changes. To avoid mid-term changes in party, continuity problems or policy reversals, League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the creation of an Office of Lieutenant Governor with duties separate from that of the Secretary of State.

In addition, the League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that the governor and the elected office, which is next in line of succession to the governor, should run on the same party ticket. If that office continues to be held by the Secretary of State, League of Women Voters Arizona strongly believe that all partisan aspects of elections should be removed from the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State and managed by an independent body/commission.

ARIZONA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports a legislative bill-making process that protects the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, providing opportunities for timely public input, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports four-year terms for all State Legislators, with no limit on the number of terms which they may serve.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports strong, enforceable conflict of interest legislation. Expansion of the support statement: Public service is a public trust, requiring officials and employees to place loyalty to the citizens, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain. Following ethical guidelines and eliminating any improprieties, or even the appearance of potential corruption, is imperative to restoring the public's trust in government. The public has a right to expect public officials to put interests of the general citizenry above those of the personal interest of the official, his/her family, any special interest groups or dark money groups that may have or continue to provide financial support to them. The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports strict adherence to the ethical principles which avoid any improprieties or the appearance thereof by full conflict of interest disclosure and voter recusal provisions.

To determine whether a substantial interest exists, the public officer should ask:

1. Could the decision affect, either positively or negatively, an interest of the officer or employee or the officer's or employee's relative?
2. Is the interest a pecuniary or proprietary interest? Could it affect a financial interest or ownership interest?
3. Is the interest something that is not statutorily designated as a remote interest?

If the answer to each of these questions is yes, then a substantial interest exists that requires disclosure and disqualification by the public officer or employee. The public officer or employee must file a conflict-of-interest form which fully discloses the substantial interest with the appropriate agency or governmental unit, and must refrain from participating in any manner in discussions or decisions relating to the matter.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports increase in pay for legislators.

ARIZONA JUDICIAL BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the selection of judges by appointment, with voter approval for retention; adequate judicial salaries; longer terms; higher qualifications for justices of the peace and magistrates; a judicial nominating commission, responsible to the governor; and a competency review commission.

To assure that our judges are free of political bias and possessed of the proper qualities of temperament and intellect, and yet retain ultimate control of the courts in the hands of the people.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports:

- Appointment of judges by the governor from list of qualified nominees submitted by a bipartisan commission of legal and lay members.
- Retention of a judge in office, after an established period of time, only by a "yes" vote of the people, a "no" vote requiring a new appointment by the governor.

(This system of judicial selection and tenure was implemented in Pima, Maricopa, Pinal, and Coconino counties after they reached the constitutionally required population of 250,000. Counties not having reached that population can adopt merit selection by a vote of their electorate. Although we have basically accomplished our goal, we retain the position because in each session of the Legislature, there are efforts to return to the old elective system.)

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Concurrence of the LWV California (LWVC) Position on Criminal Justice, adopted May 16, 2021

All Arizona citizens have a right to equal treatment under the law and to a criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry. The adoption of the LWVC criminal justice position was based on these principles and objectives:

- the elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities;
 - policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve;
 - collaboration between government and community throughout every stage of the criminal justice system;
- a focus on humane treatment and rehabilitation with the goal of promoting the successful reentry into communities of those who have been incarcerated; and
 - reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies (including scheduled, periodic audits of program and policy effectiveness).

California Position on Criminal Justice

The LWV California supports:

- a criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry;
- the elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities;
 - policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve;
 - collaboration between government and community throughout every stage of the criminal justice system;
- a focus on humane treatment and rehabilitation with the goal of promoting the successful reentry into communities of those who have been incarcerated; and

- reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies (including scheduled, periodic audits of program and policy effectiveness)

Details:

Policing Practices - constitutional policies and procedures established by law enforcement with input from the communities they serve:

- local law enforcement agencies.
- Build public trust and positive community relationships through police engagement with community members.
 - Encourage community participation in the development of policing policy.
- Provide police accountability via independent citizen oversight of law enforcement and publicly available data on officer conduct.
- Disseminate information to the public about policing policies, recruitment, procedures for complaint/commendation, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens and officers in interactions with each other.
- Provide sufficient psychological services and counseling to meet stress-related needs of police personnel.
- Staff police departments to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, and establish recruitment efforts that reflect this principle.
 - Train police to identify individuals with mental health conditions, disabilities, or substance abuse/addiction, so that officers will request support from appropriate medical and mental health professionals, with the goal of diverting those individuals into treatment instead of jail.
- Require all officers to render first aid to people who have been injured as a result of police action.
 - Conduct comprehensive background checks, to include such history as PTSD, domestic violence, sex offenses and affiliations with domestic terrorist groups, for all applicants to law enforcement positions.
 - Establish de-escalation (the use of time, distance, communications and available resources whenever it is safe to do so) and anti-bias training, and ensure that all staff are provided with this training.
- Authorize minimal use of force during police encounters with the public, and consider deadly force only when necessary, to prevent imminent death or serious bodily injury.

Pre-trial Procedures - actions taken after an individual has been arrested, which embody the constitutional presumption of innocence:

- Ensure no person suffers discrimination before the law due to their economic status nor should they be subject to risk assessment tools which can produce biased outcomes.
- Provide adequate numbers of public defenders to defend indigent accused.
- Provide prosecutors, defense attorneys, court counselors and judges with regular training on alternatives to incarceration, including pre-trial diversion and restorative justice practices.
- Recognize that mental health conditions and substance abuse/addictions are public health issues, not crimes.
- Implement the use of specialty courts, e.g. drug treatment courts and restorative justice programs.
- Consider community-based treatment programs and other alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.

Sentencing - judgment made after an individual has been declared to be guilty:

- Consider the individual circumstances of the person charged and nature of the crime, rather than mandatory minimum sentences.
 - Consider split sentencing and/or alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.

Incarceration - policies and procedures that apply to employees of and incarcerated individuals in local jails and state prisons:

- Ensure that all correctional systems provide humane, dignified, non-discriminatory treatment of incarcerated people and personnel, including appropriate healthcare and access to community-based rehabilitation programs.
 - Eliminate the practice of solitary confinement.
- Ensure that incarcerated people and corrections officers have clear, safe and accessible ways to report abuse.
 - Address recidivism by instituting programs that focus on rehabilitation, education, mental health treatment, substance abuse recovery, and transitional programs.
- Adapt case management services to match education, behavior, job training, work, and mental health programs with the needs of incarcerated individuals.
- Provide sufficient psychological services, including training and evaluation, to meet the needs of corrections officers.
 - Encourage family and community visitations and ways to maintain contact.
 - Eliminate private prisons. Until space in public prisons is available, ensure that private prisons comply with all of the standards for state-run jails and prisons.

Re-entry - programs in place during and after incarceration to help individuals become successful members of their communities:

- Collaborate with community-based organizations to facilitate reintegration of people released from prison.
- Provide pre- and post-release programs, inclusive of probation services, to prepare as well as assess and address the needs of people re-entering the community.
 - Remove technical violations of parole as a reason to return an individual to prison.

General - statements which apply to some or all of the above categories:

- Standardize data and setting up systems so that information can be easily shared among criminal justice agencies.
- Rely on evidence-based research in decision making about criminal justice programs and policies.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports early intervention programs beginning in elementary schools with the help of:

- counselors, social workers, psychologists, volunteers in school programs and individualized programs, including those that foster self-esteem,
 - clinics on parenting skills,
 - conflict resolution skills training,

- drug education.

Funding for the above should come from federal, state, local, private, and corporate sources.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports measures for adequate funding with emphasis on prevention, rehabilitation, incarceration and non-incarceration facilities, and intervention programs, trained personnel and education for parents of problem children. State funding should be dispersed to the local levels.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that programs and policies should be adopted which promote rehabilitation and education within the Juvenile Justice system and should include:

- schooling while in detention,
- counseling for the family and the individual while in detention, and
- alternative living and educational programs and experiences to prevent and discontinue gang involvement.

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The League Women Voters of Arizona believes that for the protection of the community and schools, delinquent children should:

- receive swift and firm justice,
- be removed from dysfunctional homes after family intervention and long-term family counseling, and
- be treated as an individual according to the age, need and type of crime and be sent first to juvenile court.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports laws that include:

- swift punishment for weapon possession by juveniles,
- swift and harsh punishment of adults who provide weapons to juveniles,
- the exchange of records among schools, court and social agencies but not to the public or the media,
- a juvenile hearing before transfer to adult court.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the concept of an approach to juvenile problems through Restorative Justice programs, which give priority to and accountability for wrongdoing by repairing the damage or harm done to victims and the community through a process of victim involvement, community participation, mediation and reparation. Skilled mediators should be involved in this process.

LOWER COURT REFORM

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports legislation which would give Arizona counties the option to consolidate their lower courts in order to promote uniformity in the administration and quality of justice, and effectiveness and efficiency in court administration.

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports adequate protection and representation of

consumers, including residential consumers, in the Arizona Corporation Commission process and supports measures to encourage conservation as well as the development and use of renewable energy sources.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports an amendment to the Arizona Constitution to permit counties to decide, by a vote of the people in each county, the governmental structure which best meets county needs.

The LWV of Metropolitan Phoenix supports home rule for Maricopa County. The LWV of Greater Tucson supports a long term goal of consolidated government for Pima County. The League position supporting local option for county governmental structure gives the LWVAZ a position from which to lobby, but does not restrict other local Leagues from positions they may take regarding their own county government.

SOCIAL POLICY

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

Concurrence 1983; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes in the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

HUMAN NEEDS

Consensus 1971; Revised 1985; Reviewed 1995, Amended 2007

The League of Women of Arizona supports a state system that provides for a positive program to assist the economically disadvantaged in obtaining a greater measure of financial, physical and personal well-being, with emphasis on meeting basic human needs rather than on maintaining minimum expenditures.

In order to assist persons in need, to assure the basic essentials of health and adequate standards of living, reduce dependency, and break the welfare cycle, the state of Arizona should:

- Assure supportive programs and services integrated with those for the general public on an available-to- pay basis, including legal services, comprehensive health care, child care, transportation, family planning, home management, family counseling, vocational training, and educational enrichment.
- Work with private and public agencies, and utilize community services to the fullest.
- Encourage recipients to work when possible, with child care, counseling, job training and financial incentives available and to participate in program development and implementation.
- Disseminate information on welfare programs and interpret the needs of the community to the public. Provide adequate funds for capable, qualified staff, manageable caseloads, information and referral services, and accessible office facilities.

- Administer funds and programs wisely, according to sound management and accounting principles, while preserving the rights and dignity of recipients

VICTIMIZATION OF CHILDREN AND INTRAFAMILIAL ABUSE

Adopted 1985; Revised 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that government, both state and local, including the state legislature and state and local agencies, should assure that necessary services are readily available to serve and protect the abused. These persons should be the focus of careful and timely long- range planning by these agencies and by the courts.

Adequate resource allocations shall be made within child protective and state agency budgets, within police and law enforcement budgets, and within the court system to assure the proper training and education of those who deal with these issues. The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports violence prevention programs in all communities and action to support:

- Public and private development and coordination of programs that emphasize the primary prevention of violence.
- The active role of government and social institutions in preventing violent behavior.
- The allocation of public monies in government programs to prevent violence.

GUN SAFETY

Consensus May 16, 2021

Over the last three decades, the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) has advocated for gun safety legislation. The LWVUS believes that gun violence in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The LWVUS supports strong federal measures regulating gun ownership by private citizens with licensing procedures including a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education, and licensing renewal. All Arizona citizens have a right and need to feel safe. We believe gun ownership comes with civic responsibility, demonstrating responsible ownership and handling.

Responsible ownership and handling should be supported by:

1. Enacting Universal Background Checks for all gun purchases and transfers.
2. Regulating assault weapons and high-capacity magazines including restricting the presence of assault weapons to rifle ranges.
3. Enacting a licensing process that requires background checks and safety training/education compliance.
4. Requiring safety training for gun purchases and carrying concealed weapons.
5. Enacting a waiting period for gun purchases.
6. Enacting Safe Storage laws for unattended guns.
7. Enacting a law allowing judges to temporarily remove guns from a person where there is clear evidence that the person poses a danger to themselves or others.

Enacting laws preventing people with domestic violence convictions from possessing guns and ammunition.

9. Repealing Stand-Your-Ground laws.
10. Restricting the presence of guns in public spaces.
11. Allowing communities to implement voluntary programs such as buy-back or gun disposal.
12. Regulating “ghost” guns and/or sales of their components.
13. Outlawing straw gun purchases.

Additionally, we advocate for:

14. Supporting and funding community-based violence intervention programs.
15. Mandating de-escalation training for law enforcement.
16. Requiring more accountability for police shootings.
17. No armed teachers, security, or school resource officers.
18. Supporting research-based initiatives/activities that have shown to reduce school shootings.
19. Supporting and funding research on gun violence at all levels of government.

EDUCATION

This position was originally adopted in 1979 and included public school finance, funding sources for schools, citizen participation and other concerns. In 1999 the position on charter schools was added and in 2005 the high stakes testing position was added. In 2017, LWVAZ adopted an updated education position.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE

The Arizona State Constitution states that the legislature shall enact such laws as shall provide for the establishment and maintenance of a general and uniform public school system, which system shall include: 1. Kindergarten schools. 2. Common schools. 3. High schools. 4. Normal schools. 5. Industrial schools. 6. Universities...and for the care and education for hearing and vision impaired students. The state constitution declares that the revenue for the maintenance of the state’s educational institutions shall be derived from the investment of the proceeds of the sale and rental of trust lands and from “appropriations, to be met by taxation, as shall insure the proper maintenance of all state educational institutions, and shall make such special appropriations as shall provide for their development and improvement.” (Arizona Const., Article XI, Sec. 10)

As the Arizona Constitution recognizes education’s importance, so too does the League of Women Voters of Arizona (LWVAZ) see the importance of high quality education for this state’s citizens: 1) to lead satisfying lives, 2) to qualify for the increasingly challenging jobs in today’s and tomorrow’s economy, and 3) to function successfully as informed citizens of the United States’ democracy.

Therefore, the LWVAZ supports funding of a public education system that results in the uniform opportunity for all students to master the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to thrive in a competitive and changing world.

More specifically, the LWVAZ supports the following:

Funding for Quality

- The primary goal of state and local school governing bodies is the achievement of the best quality education for the students in their districts / schools.
- The establishment of criteria for a best quality education for all students must be made prior to determining the formula for the distribution of monies.
- The criteria must be based always on current research, thought, and best practices regarding teaching and learning, and other factors impacting academic success such as school readiness, attendance, parent engagement, and enrichment programs beyond the normal school day / calendar year.

Collection of Funds

Funds for education in Arizona are collected through district property taxes and equalized through state income and sales taxes from the State's General Fund. In addition, the League supports:

- Continued use of the state trust land's income from the Permanent Fund Investments.
- Funds determined through a public initiative or referendum. Funds generated through development impact fees.
- Bond and override funds determined by a majority of district voters.

Adequate Funding Formula

The LWVAZ recognizes the inequities of the local school property tax. Therefore, the League supports a state funding formula which provides for:

- Decreased reliance on the local school district property tax and increased reliance on statewide taxes for support of public school education.
 - Taxation by the state legislature to support public schools by a simple majority vote.
 - An inflation allowance.
 - A defined basic amount of money for each student.
 - Financing over and above the basic amount to ensure equal opportunity for each student.
 - Uniform maintenance of buildings.
 - Uniform supplies.
- Nationally competitive salaries that recognize strong leaders, as well as experience and quality teaching.
- New monies that do not supplant present state funding.

Distribution of Funds

The LWVAZ supports a uniform distribution of state funds to include:

- Capital funding.
- Additional allocations which are made based on recognition of differences in needs among district schools and between district and charter schools.

- Funds for special needs of students.
- Funds for the entire duration of mandated programs.
- Allocations for social services for students and their families.
- Allocations for safe, adequate and reliable transportation separate from base maintenance and operation support.

Fiscal Accountability

All schools using public funds, including public charter schools, will be held fiscally accountable and will be held to the same standards of transparent operation that ensure fiscal accountability. The district and charter school budget format should call for specific information, such as program detail, salary schedules, and capital improvement programs

The LWVAZ opposes tax “credits” and funding schemes that divert and distort the distribution of funds intended to ensure a quality education for all children in Arizona public schools.

Therefore, the LWVAZ opposes vouchers to private schools, tuition tax credits, waivers, or direct payments to parents for school expenses of their children (as in Empowerment Scholarship Accounts). Public funds should be used only for public schools.

Local Participation in Decision Making & Distribution of Funds

The LWVAZ supports the principle that the governmental entity closest to the school district constituency can best make decisions that will enhance the equal educational opportunity for all students. Therefore, the League urges these policies:

- The state distributes funds uniformly to public school districts and charters, and sets minimal general educational guidelines without inhibiting local decision making.
- The state will maintain a policy of local control on spending decisions, including ability to bond for school renovation and for capital improvements, as well as measures to equalize the ability of school districts to finance those portions of their budgets for which they are responsible on the local level.
- Local district and charter school governing bodies determine how funds are allocated in school budgets.

The LWVAZ, always encouraging responsive government and informed citizen participation, believes that citizen participation is essential in the district and charter school budgeting process. Therefore, the League supports the following:

- Advisory committees open to all citizens in the school community that provide citizen input into the district and public charter school budgetary processes.
- Timely citizen input into the district or public charter school budgetary process that allows for informed citizen influence on the allocation of funds in the budget.

PUBLIC EDUCATION INSTRUCTION

Academic Assessments

The LWVAZ believes that no single assessment should be the deciding factor for graduation from high school. Therefore, the League supports a diploma being awarded to students who satisfactorily complete their course work.

The LWVAZ supports the use of district, state and/or other government-mandated assessments for the following purposes:

- Identifying and alleviating students' academic difficulties in a timely manner.
- Identifying necessary changes in curriculum, methods, and materials.

The LWVAZ believes it is important for district and/or statewide assessments to be well-crafted, meaningful, and well-matched with the Arizona Standards. Therefore, the League supports the following:

- Utilizing Arizona K-12 educators to develop and write the questions for district and/or statewide assessments and educators from institutions of higher learning to evaluate these tests in their areas of expertise.
- Validating the tests to be sure they reflect the Arizona Standards and appropriate grade level academic proficiency.

If state and/or government-mandated assessment testing is required for high school graduation in Arizona, the League recognizes that provisions need to be made for those who fail. Therefore, the League supports retesting students who fail required state and/or government-mandated assessment(s) during their high school years.

Curricular areas not specifically tested or required as part of state and/or government-mandated assessments (such as vocational/technical/career education, visual and performing arts, social studies, science, health and physical education) shall be encouraged and shall not be curtailed.

Charter Schools

The LWVAZ acknowledges that charter schools are public schools that are privately operated. Therefore, the League supports the following for charter schools:

- Provide charter schools more initial direction as they are started and organized, and continued oversight to comply with legal requirements.
- Hold charter schools to the same high standards as all Arizona public district schools.
- Charter schools that close must provide proper and timely notification to students' parents/guardians, as well as plan for an orderly transfer of students to an academically appropriate alternative. Further, charter school operators must return property purchased with state funds and return any unspent state funds that have been appropriated from the Arizona General Fund.

With respect to Charter Schools, the LWVAZ also has the following concerns:

- Funding for charter schools may negatively impact funds available for public district schools.
- Charter schools may not be utilizing standardized sequential curriculum.

Additional Education Policies & Practices

The LWVAZ supports the following policies and practices that relate to public district and charter schools:

- All public schools should be permitted and encouraged to innovate. They must be allowed flexibility on class size, length of school day, teaching techniques, and special subject focus (such as science, the arts, technology).
- All public district and charter school teachers must be certified by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) as “well-qualified”.
 - Annual and equitable academic evaluation of charter and district schools should occur.
 - The ADE should be sufficiently staffed to ensure student achievement is properly monitored in both public district and charter schools.
- The school curriculum for both public district and charter schools must comply with standards set by the Arizona State Board of Education.
 - School ranking must not be based solely on test scores.
 - Public information about public district and charter schools must be accessible to all.
 - An efficient system of tracking students as they move between schools/participate in open enrollment or other school choice options must be developed and adopted.
- School districts should be reorganized only if doing so will enhance the education of all students in the reorganized districts.

NATURAL RESOURCES

LAND USE

Consensus 1975; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports:

- Action to achieve a physical environment beneficial to life, with emphasis on achieving an optimum balance between human needs and the carrying capacity of the land and its resources.
- Statewide land use planning which should include economic, social and environmental components, basic services, transportation, new concepts of community design, the best use of resource conservation measures in land use planning, with emphasis on the effects of population growth and distribution.
- Measures to preserve open space and natural habitat, identify and regulate areas of critical concern, including fragile areas, historic areas, riparian habitats, renewable resource lands, and natural hazard lands.
- Statewide authority over areas and activities outside of local government jurisdiction, or which their governmental bodies fail to regulate.
- Protection of private property in accordance with the Fifth Amendment, but retaining the government's right to regulate the use of land through its power to protect the public health, welfare and safety, the decision whether a regulation constitutes a partial taking should be determined by the courts.
- Requirements for evaluation of economic, social and environmental impacts of major land use

projects, whether initiated by government agencies or by private interests.

- Policies which assure the quality of the environment for people of all economic levels.
- Increased coordination and communication among land use agencies at all levels of government, and between those agencies and the public.
- Requiring any boards, commissions or agencies having authority or responsibility over land use planning to be comprised of individuals representing a balance of diverse citizen interests and concerns.
- Public input into all stages of planning and decision making.
- Increased technical and financial assistance to localities for growth management, encouragement of local communities to use innovative planning and regulatory techniques, and to incorporate measures to conserve energy, integrate transportation planning, consider availability of water and other resources.

WATER

Consensus 1975, 1979; Revised 1995, Amended 2009, Revised 2023.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that clean surface water and groundwater are essential, finite public resources that all citizens hold in common, and these resources should be managed sustainably for the long-term benefit of all residents and ecosystems of Arizona.

Overwhelming scientific evidence indicates that climate change and increasing human demand for water in Arizona are reducing the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater resources throughout the state. The chronic overallocation of Colorado River flows and long-term drought have made the future of water inputs increasingly uncertain.

The League believes that Arizona should pursue policies that halt declining groundwater levels throughout the state, protect our watersheds and riparian natural habitats from degradation, require conservation by all water users, uphold our commitments to the Colorado River compact and reconcile competing claims on our finite water supply for the benefit of all citizens. The League believes that a strong statewide water management policy is essential to ensure Arizona's future quality of life and the economic well-being of our state. To reach these goals, the League supports immediate and sustained action by the Arizona Legislature and the Executive branch to develop and implement statutes, policies and programs that promote comprehensive long-range planning to regulate and sustainably manage all water resources in the state and to ensure their equitable use.

Water Resources and Supply

Arizona's water resources are contained in our rivers and springs and in the geological layers that hold our underground aquifers. To sustainably manage these precious resources the state must understand their inputs, withdrawals and interconnections. The League endorses the following principles:

- Base water policy at every jurisdictional level on a scientific understanding of the direct linkages between climate, precipitation, surface water and groundwater.
- Monitor the hydrology, including groundwater levels, stream and spring flows, surface water diversions, and groundwater withdrawals from all new and existing wells in all aquifers and watersheds of the state.
- Monitor water quality across all state watersheds and enforce strict water quality regulations to prevent harmful contamination of our surface and groundwater supplies.
- Undertake remediation to remove pollutants from compromised water supplies. The cost of this remediation should be borne by the polluter.
- Recognize the protection of streams, springs, and riparian habitats as "beneficial use."
- Protect and restore stream and riparian habitats.

- Use data-based, predictive, scientifically accurate hydrological models for all groundwater basins and watersheds to predict water sustainability and to measure progress toward long-term sustainability goals.
- Make up-to-date, science-based statewide data on hydrology and water quality available to the public and provide Arizona citizens with information on water issues and choices.
- Evaluate proposals for augmentation of Arizona's water resources based on feasibility, cost, energy efficiency, environmental impacts, and the likelihood that it will enhance the availability and equitable distribution of affordable water to all citizens of the state.
- When augmentation is pursued to support new development, the costs of that augmentation should be borne by those who benefit directly from that growth.
- Promote and expand water recycling, reuse, and reclamation, including direct potable reuse, stormwater capture, and water harvesting.

Water Rights

The League recognizes the application of the historic "prior appropriation for beneficial use" doctrine for surface water and the historic "reasonable use" doctrine for groundwater in adjudicating water rights in Arizona. To remove obstacles that this legal framework may present to sustainable water management and the protection of riparian ecosystems, the League supports taking the necessary steps to accomplish the following:

- Accelerate the general stream adjudication process to settle claims to surface water rights.
- Facilitate reclassification of surface water rights from one beneficial use to another.
- Ensure that, when water rights are transferred or new rights are established, the new rights are compatible with existing water management goals in the region.
- Facilitate the establishment of in-stream flow rights.
- Provide mechanisms for limiting non-beneficial or wasteful surface water use.
- Ensure that riparian habitats and in-stream flows are protected when any new surface water rights are granted, when there are water exchanges or changed uses, or when groundwater withdrawals have the potential to negatively affect riparian habitats.
- Assign a permitted quantity to all groundwater withdrawal rights.
- Plan and develop a priority system for modifying permitted quantities and uses of groundwater and/or surface water in times of shortage.
- Equitably allocate groundwater withdrawal rights to landowners who share a common aquifer.

Water Planning and Management

The overarching goal of water planning and management should be long-term sustainability of all surface and groundwater resources of the state. Sustainability is achieved when groundwater levels are stabilized by balancing withdrawal and recharge, and when flows in streams and springs are maintained or restored to ecologically sound levels. In addition, water quality must be maintained or remediated in surface and groundwater water reserves throughout the state. The League supports the following actions to achieve these goals:

- Extend active water management to encompass all watersheds and groundwater basins of the state.
- Establish regional management plans for groundwater basins or sub-basins that are guided by input from the state but implemented and enforced at the local level to account for local conditions and issues.
- Create a timetable for achieving sustainability goals within each active or regional management area and provide regular reports of progress to the Legislature and citizens of Arizona.
- Develop a comprehensive statewide water management plan which assesses our current water situation and identifies policies and decisions that will move Arizona strategically toward water sustainability. This state water plan should be updated regularly to guide water decision-makers in making policy choices.

- Provide adequate funding to water agencies at the state and regional levels to enable planning, monitoring, implementation, enforcement, and educational activities for water management across the state.
- Provide adequate funding to accelerate the General Stream Adjudication process.
- Update and amend the Groundwater Management Act of 1980, as necessary, to ensure that all water resources are managed sustainably throughout the state for the benefit of current and future generations.
- Develop an equitable permitting process to regulate current and future water withdrawals within all management areas.
- Ensure that management plans allocate sufficient water to maintain the ecological integrity of their associated riparian ecosystems.
- Establish authority for regional management entities to reduce allocations or limit new permits to bring withdrawals into balance with supply in all management areas.
- Incentivize or mandate robust conservation efforts for all water users.
- Require new residential and industrial development to comply with strict water conservation and sustainability standards.
- Base decisions regarding agricultural expansion, industrial growth, and new housing developments on the availability of adequate water resources within that management area.

Governmental Process

The League supports:

- public participation at all levels of water resource management planning.
- equitable utilization of all water resources, and equitable distribution of the cost to ensure clean water among state water users.
- decision-making processes that are transparent, open to public scrutiny, and which request input from all water stakeholders.
- coordination and cooperation between federal, state, local and tribal water agencies and stakeholders.

The League believes that Arizona should continue to collaborate with other Colorado River Basin states in the Upper and Lower Basins to negotiate a fair and reasonable plan-of-use for Colorado River water. The League believes it is incumbent upon our elected officials to meet these urgent challenges.

