



IMPACT ON ISSUES

# Social Policy



LWV

***Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice, and the health and safety of all Americans.***

From its inception, the League has worked for equal rights and social reforms. In the early years, the League was one of the first organizations to address such issues as child welfare, maternal and child health programs, child labor protection, and laws that discriminated against women.

In the 1960s, with the nation's unrest over civil rights, the League began building a foundation of support for equal access to education, employment, and housing. The fight against discrimination broadened in the 1970s and 1980s, and the League supported the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1972, fighting hard for ratification by the states. As that effort fell short, support for the ERA undergirded action on issues from pay equity to Title IX, which requires equal educational opportunity for women.

Based on 1970s work to combat poverty and discrimination, a two-year study evaluating public and private responsibilities for providing food, shelter, and a basic income level ended in 1988, culminating in a position on Meeting Basic Human Needs. Programs to increase the availability and quality of child care and protect children at risk remained a concern.

In the 1980s, fiscal issues, from tax reform to entitlement programs and deficit reduction, were at the forefront of the League program. The League was a major force in the tax-reform effort to cut loopholes and promote fairness. It sought deficit reduction while protecting federal old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the League worked to increase the availability of high-quality child care and adopted a position in favor of community and government programs to help children reach their full potential, including early childhood education.

Leagues nationwide also worked hard on transportation issues, focusing on environmental protection and ensuring the availability of public transportation for access to employment and housing.

In the 1990s, concern for violence prevention spurred a new League position and brought strong support for commonsense measures to control gun violence. The League supported the Brady bill and sought to close loopholes that undermine consumer safety.

The 2006 Convention voted to undertake a study on immigration. After study and consensus, the new position was finalized in 2008 and sent to Capitol Hill.

Given the growing crisis in health care delivery and financing in the 1990s, the League developed a comprehensive position supporting a health care system that provides access to affordable, quality health care for all Americans and protects patients' rights. In 2010, the League's efforts saw success – the *Affordable Care Act (ACA)* was signed into law. Since 2010, the League continues to defend the ACA from challenges in Congress and the courts.

At Convention 2010, delegates voted to study the role of the federal government in public education and in March 2012, the Board announced a new position. Delegates to Convention 2012 adopted by concurrence a new position on Sentencing Equality.



The League's position on Human Trafficking was adopted by concurrence at Convention 2014 and Behavioral Health was added to the Health Care position at Convention 2016.

At Convention 2022, delegates passed a new position on Criminal Justice and an update of the Health Care position by concurrence with existing state positions.

# Criminal Justice

## The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Criminal Justice as adopted by concurrence by delegates to 55th LWVUS Convention 2022:*

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

### *Policing Practices – constitutional policies and procedures established by law enforcement with input from the communities they serve*

- **Ensure that crime prevention and promotion of public safety are the primary roles of state and 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 that 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 health care 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 that 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.

## League History

The Criminal Justice position was adopted by delegates at Convention 2022.

# Equality of Opportunity

## The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Equality of Opportunity, as revised by the national board in January 1989, based on positions announced by the national board in January 1969, adopted by the 1972 Convention, expanded by the 1980 Convention and the 2010 Convention:*

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment, and housing for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Employment opportunities in modern, technological societies are closely related to education; therefore, the League supports federal programs to increase the education and training of disadvantaged people. The League supports federal efforts to prevent and/or remove discrimination in education, employment, and housing and to help communities bring about racial integration of their school systems.

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all regardless of sex. The League supports action to bring laws into compliance with the ERA: a) to eliminate or amend those laws that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of sex; b) to promote laws that support the goals of the ERA; c) to strengthen the enforcement of such existing laws.

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.



## Further Guidelines and Criteria

In more specific terms, the kinds of programs the League supports include:

- Programs in basic education, occupational education, and retraining when needed at any point of an individual's working career.
- Expanded opportunities in apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs.
- Child-care centers for preschool children to give parents the opportunity for employment.
- Greatly increased educational opportunity through compensatory programs for disadvantaged groups beginning at the preschool level and extending through secondary education.
- Federal financial aid to help needy students remain in high school and to take advantage of post-high school training and education.
- A regional approach to problems of economically depressed areas that cuts across state lines. This approach can be handled administratively by such means as interstate cooperation or more formal interstate compacts, or commissions made up of representatives of state and federal governments. Development programs should reflect the needs of the particular area and can include such measures as provision of education and training for available jobs, encouragement of new industry in the area, development and conservation of natural resources, and the building of public facilities.
- Programs that would inform individuals of their civil rights in education, employment, and housing, and of the opportunities open to them.
- Full use of mediation and conciliation in efforts to bring about integration of minority groups into full participation in community life.
- A federal clearinghouse for the exchange of information on solutions communities have found to problems of integration in employment, education, and housing.
- Programs to bring about effective integration of schools through federal technical assistance such as training programs and institutes for teachers and school administrators.
- Withholding federal funds from school districts that fail to meet realistic and effective guidelines and standards for school integration.
- Withholding government contracts from businesses and industries that discriminate in employment.
- An effective federal fair employment practices agency.

## Education and Employment Criteria

In evaluating federal programs that have been, or will be, established to provide equality of opportunity for education and employment, the League will support those programs that largely fulfill the following criteria:

- The nationwide effort to achieve equality of opportunity in education and employment should include participation of government at all levels and encourage the participation of private institutions.
- Programs should be carefully tailored to the educational or employment needs of the people they are intended to reach.
- People for whom community action programs are designed should be involved in the planning and implementation of those programs.
- The programs should be carried out by personnel competent to meet the specific requirements of their jobs.
- Programs should assist people to become self-supporting, contributing members of society.
- The programs should be nondiscriminatory with provisions for enforcement.





- Research, pilot projects, and continuing evaluation should be encouraged and, where feasible, built into programs.
- Programs may be closely related but should avoid unnecessary duplication.
- State and local governments should contribute to the extent their resources permit; at the same time, adequate federal funds for the establishment and continuation of programs should be available if necessary.

### **Fair Housing Criteria**

The following criteria should be applied to programs and policies to provide equal opportunity for access to housing without discrimination:

- Opportunities for purchase or renting of homes, and for borrowing money for housing should not be restricted because of discriminatory reasons such as race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.
- Responsibility in the nationwide effort to achieve equality of opportunity for access to housing resides with government at all levels and with the private sector — builders, lending institutions, realtors, labor unions, business and industry, news media, civic organizations, educational institutions, churches, and private citizens.
- The continued existence of patterns of discrimination depends on the covert support of community leaders, institutions, and residents. Award or withdrawal of federal contracts and placement of federal installations should be used as levers to change this covert support.
- After positive steps such as mediation and conciliation have been exhausted, the federal government should have the option for selective withholding of federal funds where patterns of discrimination in access to housing occur. In applying the option to withhold funds, the federal government should weigh the effects of its actions on the welfare of lower-income and minority groups.
- Federal programs should include provisions to guarantee equal opportunity for access to housing. Federal funds should not be used to perpetuate discrimination.
- In the enforcement of fair-housing laws, speedy resolution should be ensured. Administrative procedures and responsibilities should be clearly defined and widely publicized.
- Mediation and legal redress should be readily available. The process should ensure every possible protection for both complainant and persons or institutions against whom complaints are lodged. Avenues for mediation and legal redress should be widely publicized and should be easily accessible.
- Funding should be adequate to provide trained, competent staff for public education to inform citizens of the provisions of fair-housing legislation, of their fair-housing rights, and of procedures to be followed in securing them. Adequate funding should also be available for mediation and for all aspects of speedy enforcement.
- There should be continued evaluation to provide a basis for revision and strengthening of all procedures so that equality of opportunity for access to housing can be accomplished.

### **League History**

By 1966, the League had reached its first position on combatting poverty and discrimination: support of policies and programs to provide equal opportunity for all in education and employment. The position described general criteria and specific kinds of programs to further these goals.

“An evaluation of equality of opportunity for housing” was in the proposed program slated for 1968 Convention consideration. Two events that spring caused delegates to alter the normal sequence of study/consensus/position:



the shock waves in cities following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the passage of a new civil rights bill that included fair housing.

Convinced that League members knew where they stood on fair housing, delegates amended the existing position at Convention, adding support for equality of opportunity for housing, and they redirected the study from an evaluation of the concept to an evaluation of the means to achieve the goal. By December 1969, members had endorsed criteria for ensuring fair housing and adequate housing supply.

The League has consistently supported federal programs aimed at combating poverty and discrimination and has worked at the community level for successful implementation. The list is long – starting with programs initiated under the long-defunct Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), legal services, community action agencies, Job Corps, urban renewal, Model Cities, and others designed to provide equal access to housing, employment, and education.

When the federal government combined many categorical grant programs into block grants, the League found new ways to work for the goals and policies it supports. In 1973, the League began monitoring the impact of the General Revenue Sharing (GRS) program on poverty and discrimination. This resulted in reforms incorporated into the 1976 GRS amendments that tightened weak antidiscrimination provisions and expanded citizen participation and accountability requirements, but efforts to direct more funds to jurisdictions in greatest need failed.

Since the late 1970s, threats to League goals and policies have taken the form of frequent legislative and executive attempts to drastically reduce federal funding of League-supported programs, as well as persistent moves to dilute existing civil rights laws and policies. The League has actively opposed tuition tax credits, budget cuts in social welfare programs, and large, untargeted block grants, while supporting strengthened fair-housing legislation and civil rights legislation to reaffirm congressional intent in passing Title IX of the *Education Amendments of 1972* that the law be broadly interpreted and applied.

The League's Social Policy positions were revised in 1989. The Equal Access to Education, Employment, and Housing position was combined with Equal Rights into one Equality of Opportunity position.

The 1992 Convention added language to the Equality of Opportunity position, stating that it referred to "all persons, regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability." In July 1992, LWVUS joined the National Endorsement Campaign in calling for the extension of existing civil rights laws by local, state, and federal legislation to prohibit discrimination against lesbians and gay men in jobs, housing, and public accommodations. In the 106th Congress (1999-2001), LWVUS supported federal legislation targeting hate crimes. Convention 2010 added language to the Equality of Opportunity position to equalize the rights of same-gender couples to those of heterosexual couples.

## EMPLOYMENT

The League has supported federal job training programs and is on record in favor of a full employment policy, i.e., the concept of assuring a job for all those able and seeking to work. In 1978, the League supported passage of the *Humphrey-Hawkins* bill to promote full employment.





The League supported the public service employment (PSE) component of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Program (CETA) during the 1970s and worked for the passage of emergency jobs legislation in 1983, spearheading a Call to Action for Jobs for Women that resulted in more funding for the types of public-service jobs that women traditionally perform. In 1994, the League unsuccessfully supported passage of the *Infrastructure Jobs Act* and the *Full Employment Opportunity Act*, both targeted specifically toward urban areas.

## FAIR HOUSING

The League made passage of the Fair Housing Amendments a priority in 1980, which passed the House but was filibustered in the Senate. Another attempt in 1983 – 84 was put on hold in light of more-pressing civil rights issues.

In addition to the League supporting the reauthorization of the *Home Mortgage Disclosure Act* (HMDA) in 1982, LWVEF's participation in a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-funded project in 1979 – 81 enabled local Leagues to promote the entry of women into the mortgage credit market. This involvement also sparked interest in the problems of single-headed households, displaced homemakers, and discrimination against families with children, which LWV supported prohibitions against throughout the 80s.

In 2005, the League urged Congress to create the Affordable Housing Fund, a long-overdue step toward addressing the housing crisis that confronts families with low and extremely low incomes. It also urged House members to protect activities of the nonprofit groups providing the bulk of housing services for our poorest communities. In June 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, LWVUS signed on to a coalition letter authored by The Leadership Conference and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition calling on congressional representatives to vote in favor of *H.J. Res. 90*, a *Congressional Review Act* resolution of disapproval to nullify rulemaking by the Office of the Comptroller of Currency. Changing the rules would have undermined the *Community Reinvestment Act of 1977* by allowing for large investments where the largest rewards could be made, rather than requiring smaller targeted investments in underserved neighborhoods.

## Nondiscrimination & Affirmative Action

Through legislative and regulatory approaches, as well as litigation, the League advocates affirmative action programs for minorities and women. Action has included a lawsuit to compel the US Department of Labor (DOL) to issue goals and timetables governing the employment of women in nontraditional jobs and apprenticeship programs and prodding to ensure enforcement. The League has worked to combat administrative initiatives to restrict the enforcement authority of DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Since 1977, the League has supported measures to combat employment discrimination in Congress itself.

The League has been outspoken in supporting affirmative action programs and policies. That support has included filing amicus briefs in key affirmative action lawsuits, including *Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp. v. Weber* in 1979, *Boston Firefighters Union, Local 718 v. Boston Chapter NAACP* in 1983, *Firefighters Local Union No. 1784 v. Stotts* in 1984, and *Williams v. City of New Orleans* in 1983. The League has actively opposed attempts by OFCCP to weaken regulations that govern the federal contract compliance program. During the 1985 – 86 Supreme Court term, the League filed amicus briefs in three key affirmative action cases: *Local 28 Sheet Metal Workers v. EEOC*, *Local*



93 *International Association of Firefighters v. City of Cleveland*, and *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*. The Court reaffirmed the validity of voluntary race-based affirmative action in these cases.

In 1986, LWVUS signed on to another amicus brief filed in the US Supreme Court, *Johnson v. Transportation Agency*. In 1987, the Court held that public employers may adopt voluntary affirmative action plans to attain workforce balances in traditionally segregated job categories, the first instance in which the Supreme Court upheld a gender-based affirmative action plan.

In 1988, the League participated in a Supreme Court amicus brief in *Patterson v. McLean Credit Union*. In its 1989 decision, the Court reaffirmed that Section 1981 of the *Civil Rights Act of 1986*, which prohibits racial discrimination in contracts, applies to private acts of discrimination. However, the Court also held that Section 1981 does not apply to racial harassment or other discriminatory working conditions that arise after an employment contract has been entered.

Between 1984 and 1988, the League was an active player in successfully urging Congress to pass the *Civil Rights Restoration Act*, which restored four anti-discrimination laws that were narrowed by the Supreme Court's 1984 *Grove City v. Bell* decision. Subsequently, the League endorsed the *Civil Rights Act*, which reversed a series of 1989 Supreme Court decisions that seriously weakened federal employment discrimination laws and strengthened protections under federal civil rights laws. In 1990, the bill passed both houses of Congress but was vetoed by the President. In 1991 a compromise bill was passed by Congress and signed by the President. The League did not actively support this bill, in part because it placed a monetary limit on damages for sex discrimination, including sexual harassment. In 1992, the League joined other groups in supporting the *Equal Remedies Act*, which would remove the monetary limit on damages in civil rights laws.

In response to continued congressional attacks, the League joined other concerned organizations in the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights to reaffirm strong support for affirmative action programs.

In 2008, the League joined other organizations in support of the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA)*, designed to restore the ADA to its original intent and ensure coverage for Americans with disabilities in all aspects of society. The bill was passed and signed into law. In 2012, the League joined an amicus brief in *Fisher v. University of Texas*, an affirmative action case before the Supreme Court, urging the Court to recognize that diversity in higher education is crucial for the success of our multi-racial democracy.

The League continued to support this line of cases and in 2019 joined a group of social justice organizations in support of *Bostock v. Clayton County, et al*, a trio of cases challenging whether anti-LGBTQ discrimination is a form of sex discrimination in order to demonstrate to the court the importance of this issue to civil rights litigation nationwide. In addition, the League has condemned discrimination and hate, speaking out against white supremacists in Charlottesville, asking Congress to demilitarize our immigration enforcement, and not build a border wall. The League also urged Congress to support the *No Hate Act*, legislation establishing grants for state and local governments to combat hate crimes while authorizing additional penalties for hate crime offenses.

*Delegates to Convention 2020 passed a resolution around social justice reform. The resolution states:*

We Resolve First, That the League advocates against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum,



for preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement. We also call for prompt actions by all League members to advocate within every level of government to eradicate systemic racism, and the harm that it causes;

We Resolve Second, That the League help our elected officials and all Americans recognize these truths to be self-evident; that Black, Indigenous, and all people of color (BIPOC) deserve equal protection under the law; and that we demand solutions for the terrible wrongs done, so that regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and gender identity or sexual orientation, we may truly become a nation “indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

## Pay Equity

The League’s work on pay equity (equal pay for jobs of comparable worth) stemmed from member concern over the feminization of poverty. The League played a key role at the national level through its work with the broad-based National Committee on Pay Equity in the 1980s. In 1986, LWVEF participated in an amicus brief before the US Supreme Court in the pay equity case *Bazemore v. Friday*. The Court ruled a state agency may be held liable for disparities in salaries between Black and white employees, even if the disparities were caused by racial discrimination that occurred before the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*.

State and local Leagues have also endorsed legislative efforts to undertake job evaluation studies, as well as efforts to implement pay equity for public and private employees and prohibit questions about salary history.

## Equal Rights for Women

In 1972, shortly after congressional passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the national Convention overwhelmingly approved support of “equal rights for all regardless of sex” as a necessary extension of the League’s long-term support for equal opportunity for all. Delegates also voted to support the ERA. With this decisive action, the League came full circle in giving priority support once again to equal rights for women and men.

The foremothers of the women’s movement, in their 1848 Conventions at Seneca Falls and Rochester, New York, rooted the movement in a demand for women’s equality before the law. The right to vote came to be seen as the key that would unlock the door to the other rights. This vision sustained the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the forerunner of the League.

When the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920, suffrage leaders divided on strategy. Some founded the National Woman’s Party, which sponsored the first ERA, introduced in Congress in 1923. Others – the founders of the League among them – decided not to push for an ERA. While it’s hard to imagine a time in which the League opposed the ERA., delegates at the League’s 1921 Convention decided that an ERA might adversely affect new, hard-won state labor legislation, which offered some protection to tens of thousands of women working in nonunionized and similar jobs.

Moreover, though it was an organization of women, the early LWV wanted to affirm strongly that its interests and lobbying activities were not confined to women’s issues. In the 1920s and 1930s, the League set the stage for future program development by focusing on a broad range of social issues. Many were of obvious concern for women: the *Sheppard-Towner Act*, which provided federal funds for infant and maternity care; the removal of discrimination against women in immigration and naturalization laws; equality for women in the *Civil Service Classification Act*; and equal pay for equal work. During the same period, local and state Leagues worked to



eliminate sex discrimination affecting jury duty, property rights, the treatment of women offenders, and a number of other issues.

Through the 1940s, the national League program included “removal of legal and administrative discriminations against women,” but retained its statement in opposition to an ERA until 1954, when the national program was restructured and its opposition was removed.

As the League became active in the civil rights struggle of the 1960s, members grew acutely aware of the parallels between the status of women and minorities. Many state and local Leagues pursued women’s issues with new vigor, and a strong push for women’s issues developed at the national level, culminating in the 1972 Convention’s action to support the ERA.

Subsequent Conventions have reaffirmed the League’s commitment to the ERA. The 1980 Convention took the League’s commitment a step further, voting to use the new supportive ERA position as a basis not only for ratification efforts, but also to work on gender-based discrimination and actively work to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.

In 1972, lobbying for ratification – and against rescission – on a state-by-state basis became a top League priority at the national and state levels.

In 1979, LWVUS organized the National Business Council (NBC) for ERA, the first formal structure to bring major business leaders into the fight for ratification. In 1981 under an LWVUS/NBC partnership, a volunteer task force of advertising executives developed and produced radio ads designed to “sell” the ERA in seven unratified states. Throughout the media campaign, LWVUS provided extensive technical and financial assistance to state Leagues and ERA coalitions and worked to organize business efforts in the states.

The ratification process was not completed by the June 30, 1982, deadline set by Congress, but the League’s support of a constitutional guarantee of equal protection under the law remains strong. The League supported reintroduction of the ERA in Congress in 1982 and helped lead a lobbying effort that culminated in a narrow November 1983 defeat in the House.

In July 1993, the League signed on to an amicus brief in the Supreme Court case, *J.E.B. v. T.B.*, which argued that sex discrimination in jury selection is prohibited by the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution. League participation was based on support for actions to bring laws into compliance with the ERA. In 1994, the Supreme Court agreed, ruling that state laws allowing jury challenges based solely on sex are unconstitutional.

The League continued to work to achieve the goals of the expanded ERA position while laying the groundwork for passage and ratification of the ERA in the 1980s and 1990s. Issues focused on fighting for pay equity and support for the *Economic Equity Act*, which included provisions to eliminate sex discrimination in pensions and insurance. In 1996, the League endorsed the *Women’s Pension Equity Act*, legislation designed to make pension law simpler and more even-handed.



At 2018 Convention, the League again voiced strong support for final ratification of the ERA after the support of the 37th state, Illinois, pushed the amendment toward the finish line. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the ERA, crossing the necessary threshold for the ERA to become a constitutional amendment. LWVUS supported legislation introduced in Congress to remove the ratification deadline and a House resolution expressing that the ERA is valid as the 28th Amendment to the Constitution. LWVUS also worked with the ERA Coalition to urge the Attorney General to direct the US Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel to withdraw its 2020 memo that said Congress didn't have the authority to extend the ratification deadline.

At the 2022 Convention, delegates voted to add the ERA to the LWVUS program to reaffirm the League's commitment of resources and focus to accomplish its passage. LWVUS continues to connect Leagues across the country working on this issue to push for state-level measures and identify ways to leverage the League network to support congressional advocacy.

On the international front, the League of Women Voters supports the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and is on the Steering Committee of the NGO UNICEF Working Group on Girls at the UN, which formed an International Network for Girls, a global advocacy network.

## Same Gender Equality

The 1992 Convention added language to the Equality of Opportunity position, stating that it referred to "all persons, regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability."

In July 1992, LWVUS joined the National Endorsement Campaign in calling for the extension of existing civil rights laws by local, state, and federal legislation to prohibit discrimination against lesbians and gay men in jobs, housing, and public accommodations.

In the 106th Congress (1999 – 2001), LWVUS supported federal legislation targeting hate crimes. In 2004 and 2006, the League opposed the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would permanently write discrimination into the United States Constitution by limiting fundamental protections such as health care benefits for same-sex partners. Convention 2010 added language to the Equality of Opportunity position to equalize the rights of same-gender couples to those of heterosexual couples.

During the 117th Congress (2021 – 2022), LWVUS continued its support of federal hate crimes legislations in sending a letter encouraging the passage of *Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats to Equality Act (Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act)*.

## Education

### Integration

The League is committed to racial integration of schools as a necessary condition for equal access to education.

When busing became one means of achieving school desegregation, Leagues worked to ensure that laws were obeyed peacefully – building coalitions, running rumor-control centers, and sometimes going to court to gain



compliance. At the national level, the League worked to oppose anti-busing/anti-desegregation initiatives in Congress.

The League served as an amicus in Supreme Court challenges to the desegregation process. LWVEF maintained a desegregation clearinghouse and assembled League leaders and national policy experts for a workshop on metropolitan school desegregation in 1982 – 84.

### **Quality Education**

The 1974 – 76 LWVUS Program included the phrase “equal access to quality education,” reflecting League recognition that “equality” and “quality” are inseparable. However, LWVUS has never undertaken a process for determining a common League definition of quality education that could serve as a basis for action nationwide. Therefore, when the definition of quality is a key factor in a state or local community, a local or state League must conduct its own study rather than relying on the LWVUS position to take action. Many Leagues that have member agreement on quality education in specific terms use their positions to support an array of local and state educational reforms. A number of Leagues have used this position to oppose private school vouchers. LWVUS is a member of the National Coalition for Public Education, which opposes vouchers.

### **Tuition Tax Credits**

The 1978 Convention directed the national board to oppose tax credits for families of children attending private elementary and secondary schools. Convention action was based on League support for equal access to education and support for desegregation as a means of promoting equal access. The League is concerned about the negative impact that tuition tax credits would have on the public schools by encouraging flight, particularly from desegregated schools. The League also supports federal efforts through IRS regulation to deny tax-exempt status to racially discriminatory “segregation academies.”

### **Federal Programs**

The League supports many federal education programs, some designed to meet the special educational needs of the poor and minorities and others to give women and minorities equal education opportunities. In 2012, the League conducted a study further defining the role of the federal government in education.

The League worked for passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal aid. Subsequently, the League has focused on thwarting congressional attempts to dilute Title IX, as well as on advancing federal enforcement efforts. At the national level, the League was active in major court challenges to Title IX, defending key provisions and urging a broad interpretation of Title IX’s scope. In 1983, the League filed an amicus brief in *Grove City College v. Bell*, a major Supreme Court case that narrowed considerably the prohibitions of Title IX. In 1984, after the Court’s decision, the League supported efforts in Congress for new legislation clarifying congressional intent on the scope of coverage of Title IX and similar civil rights statutes.

In 2003, the League responded to a Department of Education effort to scale back Title IX. LWVUS opposed attempts to weaken the law and lobbied in support of congressional resolutions affirming that Title IX had made great progress in establishing equal opportunity for girls and women in education and school athletics. In July 2003,





the Department of Education affirmed its support for Title IX without change. In September 2004, LWVUS signed on to an amicus brief in *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education*, supporting Title IX's original intent of broad and effective protection against gender discrimination by ensuring that individuals who bring discriminatory practices to light are protected from retaliation and reprisal.

Under an LWVEF project to monitor sex equity in vocational education programs in 1981 – 82, several state Leagues evaluated progress toward meeting federal sex-equity mandates. Vocational education programs have significant impact on employment, particularly for women who have difficulty gaining access to training programs for higher paying jobs. In addition, LWV promoted the enrollment of girls and young women in math and science courses to prepare them for the jobs of the future.

In 2020, the League joined civil rights partners on an amicus brief in the case of *Hecox v. Little*, a lawsuit challenging *Idaho's Fairness in Women's Sports Act*. The Idaho law prohibits transgender students from taking part in female sports, and the harms would be felt by trans students as well as by intersex persons, non-binary persons, and many cisgender women and girls. The district court concluded that the Act constitutes a violation of the equal protection clause and the amicus brief highlights that the Act also violates Title IX's prohibition on sex discrimination.

### **Education Financing**

Many state and local Leagues have identified inequities in education financing during the course of their own program studies and have worked for reforms. Action on school financing equity takes place predominantly at the state level, where school financing laws are made.

## **Federal Role in Public Education**

### **The League's Position**

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*Statement of Position on Federal Role in Public Education as announced by the national board in March 2012:*

**The League of Women Voters believes that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide an equitable, quality public education for all children from pre-K through grade 12. A quality public education is essential for a strong, viable, and sustainable democratic society and is a civil right.**

**The League believes that the role of the federal government should include the following:**

- **Provide leadership and vision to promote a quality education for all children.**
- **Provide broad common standards developed by educational experts upon which states and local education agencies can build.**
- **Provide a suggested curricular structure or framework as a guide to state and local education agencies to develop their own curricula.**
- **Provide a national assessment that clearly informs teachers, parents, and students about how well individual students have mastered criteria established at the national level.**
- **Provide a national assessment that informs districts how well their populations compare to other populations similar to theirs.**



- Provide a combination of competitive grants and non-competitive funding to states and local school districts to achieve equity among states and populations.

The League of Women Voters believes that an equitable, quality public education is critical for students. While the League recognizes that there are instances where the federal government's involvement is the only way to achieve universal change (e.g., desegregation, special needs population, gender equity), we also recognize that primary responsibility for public education resides with the states. In accordance with the League of Women Voters' position on Equal Rights, the League continues to support equity in public education for all through:

- Broad guidelines for accountability, leaving implementation to the state and local education agencies.
- Adequate funding for sources that support the broad goals of national standards.
- Mechanisms for local and state funding with adequate federal support for mandates that require less-burdensome, compliance-based reporting and regulations.

The League of Women Voters believes a basic role of the federal government in funding education should be to achieve equity among states and populations on the basis of identified needs. This should be done with full understanding that equity does not mean equal, given that some populations are more expensive to educate than others and some localities have specific needs.

The League believes that the federal government should be primarily responsible for funding any programs mandated by the federal government on local education agencies. Although the League recognizes equity in education depends on meeting basic human needs of children and of their families, the costs associated with providing equitable access to safe neighborhoods and secure housing do not belong in the education budget. Major programs of federal funding for public education (i.e., *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*) should be targeted toward children living in poverty and/or children with special needs.

The federal government has the responsibility to monitor and support access to the following:

- High-quality teaching and learning, supported by quality current learning materials and well-maintained educational facilities.
- Access to health care needs (e.g., hearing, vision, dental, immunization, school-based health clinics at the secondary level) and nutritionally adequate food (i.e., school-based meals under "free and reduced meal programs").

The League of Women Voters believes that the first five years of a child's life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. Additionally, the League believes quality, developmentally appropriate, voluntary early learning experiences should be available to all children, with federally funded opportunities going first to children of poverty and/or with special needs. The League believes that the federal government should support the following:

- Early childhood education programs that include funding for parent education and involve child development, health, nutrition, and access to other supportive services such as mental health care for all children and their families.
- Research that documents quality early childhood education programs.
- Research that demonstrates the importance of linking state and local community partnerships with effective early childhood education programs and services.



## League History

Convention 2010 delegates voted to embark on a two-year study of the Federal Role in Public Education. Local and state Leagues across the country participated in the study and a position was announced in March 2012.

# Fiscal Policy

## The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Fiscal Policy, as adopted by 1984 Convention and as announced by the national board, March 1985, January 1986, and June 1986:*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that federal fiscal policy should provide for adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that relies primarily on a broad-based income tax; responsible deficit policies; and a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance.**

### *Federal Deficit*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the current federal deficit should be reduced. In order to reduce the deficit, the government should rely primarily on reductions in defense spending through selective cuts and on increased revenue through a tax system that is broad-based with progressive rates. The government also should achieve whatever savings possible through improved efficiency and management. The League opposes across-the-board federal spending cuts.**

**The League recognizes that deficit spending is sometimes appropriate and therefore opposes a constitutionally mandated balanced budget for the federal government. The League could support deficit spending, if necessary, for stimulating the economy during recession and depression, meeting social needs in times of high unemployment, and meeting defense needs in times of national security crises. The League opposes a federal budget line-item veto.**

### *Funding of Entitlements*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the federal government has a role in funding and providing for old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance. For such insurance programs, participation should be mandatory and coverage should be universal. Federal deficit reduction should not be achieved by reducing Social Security benefits.**

### *Tax Policy*

**LWVUS believes that the federal tax system should: be fair and equitable; provide adequate resources for government programs while allowing flexibility for financing future program changes; be understandable to the taxpayer and encourage compliance; and accomplish its objectives without creating undue administrative problems.**

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the federal tax system, taken as a whole, should be progressive, not proportional.**



**The League supports income as the major tax base for federal revenues; believes that the federal income tax should be broad-based with minimal tax preferences and a progressive rate structure; and opposes a value-added tax or a national sales tax in the federal revenue system.**

### *Further Guidelines*

**Under this position, the League of Women Voters would support tax measures that broaden the base and improve the equity of the income tax while working to incorporate progressivity into the tax system, taken as a whole. In evaluating specific tax preferences, the League will use the following criteria: whether the tax preference promotes equity and progressivity; whether the tax preference effectively furthers League of Women Voters program goals; whether the tax preference is the most efficient means of achieving its purpose; and whether the revenue loss from the tax preference is justifiable.**

### **League History**

The 1984 Convention adopted criteria for evaluating federal tax policies as a League position and a two-year study of US fiscal policy. The three-part study focused on tax policy, deficit issues, and entitlement funding. League members completed the tax policy portion of the study in time to position the League as a major force in the tax reform movement of 1985 – 86. As Congress debated major legislation to broaden the income tax base, the League became a recognized leader in pushing for passage of reform legislation. The League achieved a major victory after mobilizing League members and activists to urge members of Congress to pass broad-based, fair, and progressive legislation. As part of its strong legislative campaign, the League opposed a value-added tax as regressive. The League supported taxing capital gains as ordinary income and urged the removal of loopholes in the tax law.

The final two stages of the study, concluded in 1986, gave the League new tools for responding to federal deficit and budget issues. Under the deficit position, the League has supported selective cuts in defense spending that target military investment rather than readiness, in accord with the LWVUS Military Policy and Defense Spending position.

In determining what national security crises might call for deficit spending, the League is guided by its International Relations positions, including US Relations with Developing Countries. The League can also, if necessary, support selective cuts in nondefense discretionary spending. In determining its stance, LWVUS will be guided by its Social Policy, Natural Resources, Representative Government, and International Relations positions and priorities.

As Congress continued in 1986 to grapple with extraordinary federal deficits and budget dilemmas, the League took a comprehensive approach to the budget battle that combined support for increased funding for human needs, selective cuts in defense spending and necessary revenue increases. The deficit position enabled the League to oppose a balanced budget constitutional amendment in March 1986.

The deficit position, like the tax policy position, applies only at the federal level. Thus, LWVUS opposition to the line-item veto and to a constitutionally mandated balanced budget applies only to the federal government. Under the LWVUS deficit position, state Leagues will be expected to oppose state legislative resolutions and other actions calling for a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget.



Since the state budgeting process occurs under different constitutional arrangements and laws, the conclusions of the federal deficit study do not overrule any current state League positions on state budgeting processes, nor can they be used at the state level without separate state League study and member agreement on the subjects.

The Funding of Entitlements position enables LWVUS to support efforts to expand participation in the Social Security system (including participation by state and local government employees and other excluded groups). The League is opposed to measures that allow individuals to opt out of the system or measures to substitute private programs. The League opposes reducing Social Security benefits to achieve deficit reduction.

In 1990, LWVUS urged the President and Congress to produce actual deficit reductions rather than masking the problem and prodded them to rely primarily on reductions in defense spending and increased revenues through progressive taxes. In 1992, LWVUS urged the President and Congress to address the recession and promote economic development. The League called for tax and budget reform and for rebuilding the nation's infrastructure.

As the federal deficit grew, the "balanced-budget" amendment to the Constitution was introduced in Congress as a political expedient to control the federal budget. The League successfully fought against passage in the House in 1992 and both houses in 1994. The League argued it would dangerously upset the federal balance of powers and hurt the economy.

In 1995, the federal deficit began to shrink, but the push for a constitutional amendment to require a balanced budget grew. The League lobbied and brought grassroots pressure to oppose this dangerous and misleading proposal, arguing that it would hamstring the government's ability to stimulate the economy in time of recession and respond to natural disasters. Amendment opponents prevailed then and in 1996 – 97. League grassroots pressure was key in defeating balanced budget constitutional amendment efforts.

In December 1998, the League and others signed a letter urging President Clinton to use the budget surplus to invest in programs that benefit the American people, including education, health care, human needs, and the environment.

In 1999, when debate over Social Security's future heated up with various proposals to privatize the Social Security system, LWVUS endorsed the principles of the New Century Alliance for Social Security, emphasizing Social Security's central role in family income protection. The League's stance is based on support for a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance.

In the 108th Congress (2003 – 2005), the League joined with several hundred other organizations, lobbying against tax cut legislation because it was fundamentally unfair and jeopardized the nation's ability to meet its domestic and foreign responsibilities.

Responding to Congressional efforts to cut funding to the poorest of Americans during the 112th (2011 – 2013) and 113th (2013 – 2015) Congresses, the League lobbied in support of principles and programs that benefit Americans with low incomes, while opposing tax breaks for the wealthiest in the country.

The League again activated its grassroots network and lobbied against the balanced budget amendment in 2018 when both chambers of Congress attempted to move it forward.



# Health Care

*Statement of Position on Health Care, as announced by the national board, April 1993 supplemented by concurrence to add Behavioral Health, June 2016 and updated by concurrence at Convention 2022.*

## The League's Position

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**GOALS:** The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all US residents. Other US health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care.

### *Basic Level of Quality Care*

Every US resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care, and mental health care. Every US resident should have access to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive service that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care. Dental, vision, and hearing care also are important but lower in priority. The League believes that under any system of health care reform, consumers/patients should be permitted to purchase services or insurance coverage beyond the basic level.

The League supports regulatory incentives to encourage the development of cost-effective alternative ways of delivering and paying for health care. Delivery programs may take place in a variety of settings, including the home and online, and must provide quality care, meaning consistent with “standard of care” guidelines, by trained and licensed personnel, staffed adequately to ensure their own and patient safety.

As public health crises increasingly reveal, a health program should protect the health of its most vulnerable populations, urban and rural, in order to protect the health of everyone. In addition, all programs should be evaluated regularly.

Decisions on medical procedures that would prolong life should be made jointly by patient, family, and licensed health care provider. Patient decisions, including those made prior to need, should be respected.

### *Financing and Administration*

The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums. As the United States moves toward a national health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League. The League supports administration of the US health care system either by a combination of the private and public sectors or by a combination of federal, state, and/or regional government agencies.

The League supports the single-payer concept as a viable and desirable approach to implementing League positions on equitable access, affordability, and financial feasibility. In any proposed health care financing system, the League favors health insurance access independent of employment status.



Although the League prefers a health care financing system that includes all residents of the United States, in the absence of a federal program that achieves the goals of universal, affordable access to essential health services, the League supports health care programs financed by states which include continuation of federal funding and comply with League principles.

The League is opposed to a strictly private market-based model of financing the health care system. The League is also opposed to the administration of the health care system solely by the private sector or the states.

### *Taxes*

The League supports increased taxes to finance a basic level of health care for all US residents, provided health care reforms contain effective cost-control strategies.

### *Cost Control*

The League believes that efficient and economical delivery of care can be enhanced by cost-control methods. Specific cost-control methods should reflect the most-credible, evidence-based research available on how health care financing policy affects equitable access to health care, overall quality of care for individuals and populations, and total system costs of health care and its administration. Methods used should not exacerbate disparities in health outcomes among marginalized residents.

If they meet the above criteria, cost control methods could include:

- Reduction of administrative costs – both for the insurance program and for providers,
- Negotiated volume discounts for pharmaceuticals and durable medical equipment to bring prices closer to international levels – or importing of same to reduce costs.
- Evidence-based treatment protocols and drug formularies that include cost/benefit assessments of medical value.
- Malpractice reforms designed both to compensate patients for medical errors and to avoid future errors by encouraging robust quality improvement processes (at individual and systemic levels) and open communications with patients.
- Investment in well-care, such as prevention, family planning, patient education, primary care to increase health and reduce preventable adverse health events/expenditures.
- Investment in maternal/infant care, chronic disease management, and behavioral health care.
- Provision for short-term and long-term home-care services to reduce institutionalization.
- Regional planning for the allocation of personnel, facilities, and equipment.
- The establishment of maximum levels of public reimbursement to providers.
- The use of managed care.
- Utilization review of treatment.
- Mandatory second opinions before surgery or extensive treatment.
- Consumer accountability through deductibles and copayments.

### *Equity Issues*

The League believes that health care services could be more equitably distributed by:

- Allocating medical resources to underserved areas.
- Providing for training health care professionals in needed fields of care.

- Standardizing basic levels of service for publicly funded health care programs.
- Requiring insurance plans to use community rating instead of experience rating.
- Establishing insurance pools for small businesses and organizations

### *Allocation of Resources to Individuals*

The League believes that the ability of a patient to pay for services should not be a consideration in the allocation of health care resources. Limited resources should be allocated based on the following criteria considered together: the urgency of the medical condition, the life expectancy of the patient, the expected outcome of the treatment, the cost of the procedure, the duration of care, the quality of life of the patient after treatment, and the wishes of the patient and the family.

### *Public Participation*

The League supports public input as integral to the process for determining health care coverage and funding. To participate in public discussion of health policy and share effectively in making policy decisions, residents must be provided with information on the health care system and the implications of health policy decisions.

### *Behavioral Health*

The League supports:

- Behavioral health as the nationally accepted term that includes both mental illness and substance use disorder.
- Access for all people to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services.
- Behavioral health care that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care.
- Early and affordable behavioral health diagnosis and treatment for children and youth from early childhood through adolescence.
- Early and appropriate diagnosis and treatment for children and adolescents that is family-focused and community-based.
- Access to safe and stable housing for people with behavioral health challenges, including those who are chronically homeless.
- Effective re-entry planning and follow-up for people released from both behavioral health hospitalization and the criminal justice system.
- Problem-solving or specialty courts, including mental health and drug courts, in all judicial districts to provide needed treatment and avoid inappropriate entry into the criminal justice system.
- Health education – from early childhood throughout life – that integrates all aspects of social, emotional, and physical health and wellness.
- Efforts to decrease the stigmatization of, and normalize, behavioral health problems and care.

### *League History*

Given the growing crisis in health care delivery and financing in the 1990s, the League developed a comprehensive position supporting a health care system that provides access to affordable, quality health care for all Americans and protects patients' rights.

In 1990, LWVUS undertook a two-year study of the funding and delivery of health care in the United States. Phase 1 studied the delivery and policy goals of the US health care system; Phase 2 focused on health care financing and



administration. LWVUS announced its initial health care position in April 1992 and the final position in April 1993. The 2016 Convention updated the position by concurrence to include behavioral health.

The health care position outlines the goals LWVUS believes are fundamental for US health care policy. These include policies that promote access to a basic level of quality care at an affordable cost for all US residents and strong cost-control mechanisms to ensure the efficient and economical delivery of care. The Meeting Basic Human Needs position also addresses access to health care.

The health care position enumerates services League members believe are of highest priority for a basic level of quality care: the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health care), acute care, long-term care, and mental health care. Dental, vision, and hearing care are recognized as important services but of lower priority when measured against the added cost involved. Comments from numerous state and local Leagues, however, emphasized that these services are essential for children.

To achieve more-equitable distribution of services, the League endorses increasing the availability of resources in medically underserved areas, training providers in needed fields of care, standardizing the services provided under publicly funded health care programs, and insurance reforms.

The LWVUS health care position includes explicit support for strong mechanisms to contain rising health care costs. Methods to promote the efficient and economical delivery of care in the United States include regional planning for the allocation of resources, reducing administrative costs, reforming the malpractice system, copayments and deductibles, and managed care. In accordance with the position's call for health care at an affordable cost, copayments and deductibles are acceptable cost-containment mechanisms only if they are based on an individual's ability to pay. In addition, cost-containment mechanisms should not interfere with the delivery of quality health care.

The position calls for a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes, commonly known as the "single-payer" approach. The position also supports an employer-based system that provides universal access to health care as an important step toward a national health insurance plan. The League opposes a strictly private market-based model of financing the health care system. Regarding administration of the US health care system, the League supports a combination of private and public sectors or a combination of federal, state, and/or regional agencies. The League supports a general income tax increase to finance national health care reform.

The League strongly believes that, should the allocation of resources become necessary to reform the US health care system, the ability of a patient to pay for services should not be a consideration. In determining how health care resources should be allocated, the League emphasizes the consideration of the following factors, taken together: the urgency of the medical condition, the life expectancy of the patient, the expected outcome of the treatment, the cost of the procedure, the duration of care, the quality of life of the patient after the treatment, and the wishes of the patient and the family.

As LWVUS was completing Phase 2 of the study, the issue of health care reform was rising to the top of the country's legislative agenda. In April 1993, as soon as the study results were announced, LWVUS met with White House health care officials to present the results of the League's position. Since then, the League has actively participated in the health care debate.



LWVUS testified in fall 1993 before the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, the Energy and Commerce Committee, and the Education and Labor Committee, calling for comprehensive health care reform based on the League position. The League joined two coalitions – one comprising consumer, business, labor, provider, and senior groups working for comprehensive health care reform, and the other comprising groups supporting the single-payer approach to health care reform.

Throughout 1994, the League actively lobbied in support of comprehensive reform, including universal coverage, cost containment, single-payer or employer mandate, and a strong benefits package. The League emphasized LWVUS support for the inclusion of reproductive health care, including abortion, in any health benefits package.

LWVEF initiated community education efforts on health care issues with the Understanding Health Care Policy Project in the early 1990s. The project provided training and resources for Leagues to conduct broad-based community outreach and education on health care policy issues with the goal of expanding community participation in the public debate. In spring 1994, LWVEF and the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) undertook a major citizen education effort, Citizen's Voice for Citizen's Choice: A Campaign for a Public Voice on Health Care Reform. The project delivered objective information on health care reform to millions of Americans across the country through local and state League-sponsored town meetings in major media markets nationwide, involving members of Congress and other leading policy makers and analysts in health care discussions with citizens. In September 1994, LWVEF and KFF held a National Satellite Town Meeting on Health Care Reform. They also undertook a major television advertising promotion of public participation in the health care debate.

In 1997, LWVUS joined 100 national, state, and local organizations in successfully urging Congress to pass strong bipartisan child health care legislation (CHIP). In 1998, LWVUS began working for a Patients' Bill of Rights, aimed at giving Americans participating in managed care health plans greater access to specialists without going through a gatekeeper, the right to emergency room care using the "reasonably prudent person" standard, and a speedy appeals process when there is a dispute with insurers and other rights.

In 1998, LWVEF again partnered with KFF and state and local Leagues on a citizen education project, this time focused on Medicare reform, patients' bill of rights, and other health care issues. In the first phase, more than 6,500 citizens participated in focus groups, community dialogues, and public meetings. Their views were reflected in *How Americans Talk About Medicare Reform: The Public Voice*, presented to the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare in March 1999. In spring 2000, LWVEF and KFF developed and distributed two guides, *Join the Debate: Your Guide to Health Issues in the 2000 Election* and *A Leader's Handbook for Holding Community Dialogues*. The project focused on five issues under debate in the election: the uninsured, managed care and patients' rights, Medicare reform, prescription drug coverage, and long-term care.

In the late '90s, LWVUS lobbied in support of a strong Patients' Bill of Rights. Despite close votes in 2000, Senate opponents continued to block passage. At Convention 2000, League delegates lobbied their members of Congress to pass a strong, comprehensive Patients' Bill of Rights, but it was shelved as the 2000 election drew near.

In the 108th Congress (2003 – 2005), the League lobbied in support of the Health Care Access Resolution. In 2003, the League opposed the Medicare Prescription Drug bill, which the President signed into law, because of provisions that undermined universal coverage in Medicare.



In May 2006, the League urged senators to oppose the *Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act* (HIMMA), which purported to expand health care coverage, while limiting critical consumer protections provided in many states.

From 2007 through 2009, the League urged reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which in 2007 provided health care coverage to six million low-income children; the efforts were rewarded with reauthorization in early 2009.

In 2010, after two decades of work to ensure access to affordable, quality health care for all Americans and protect patients' rights, the League celebrated success when the *Affordable Care Act* (ACA) was signed into law. The League remains vigilant considering current efforts to repeal or diminish the law in Congress and the courts.

In the 112th Congress (2011 - 2013), the League continued to fight attempts to repeal the ACA and to limit provisions that provide health and reproductive services for women. State Leagues began to work with their legislatures to implement the ACA, and LWVUS signed on to an amicus brief in the challenge to the *Affordable Care Act*, which was upheld by the US Supreme Court.

In 2013, as opposition to the ACA was raised in the legislative, regulatory, and judicial processes, LWVUS submitted comments opposing religious exemptions for contraceptive services. This debate continued in the courts, and the League joined with other concerned organizations opposing broad religious exemptions to the requirement that all insurance plans provide access to contraception as basic care in the 2014 Supreme Court case of *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*.

Judicial action continued in 2015 as supporters including the League submitted an amicus brief in the case of *Burwell v. King*, which challenged the availability of tax subsidies for people who purchase health insurance on a marketplace administered by the federal government. The ACA gave states a choice not to administer their own marketplaces. The brief outlined how tax subsidies are essential to women's health and critical to the ACA's continued viability.

The League continued to support implementation of the ACA at the state level and expansion of the Medicaid program, as provided by the ACA. The League also continued its strong support for continued funding of CHIP.

The League opposed several attempts by Congress to repeal the *Affordable Care Act* in the 115th Congress (2017 - 2019), including the Graham-Cassidy Plan, the *Better Reconciliation Act*, and the *American Health Care Act*. The League activated grassroots supporters and the LWVUS Lobby Corps on these efforts and was a key member of the coalition that worked to stop passage of a final bill in the US Senate.

The League also opposed attempts in Congress to destabilize the health care market by defunding cost-sharing-reduction payments. And the League worked to spread awareness about the open enrollment period after decision by the executive branch to decrease the outreach budget, limit sign-up during the ACA open enrollment period, and reduce funding for the Navigator program.



Following the 2018 election, the League urged congressional leadership to pursue an agenda that ensures that the best health and health care are equally accessible and affordable to all in the 116th session of Congress (2019 – 2021).

In 2020, as Congress began to address the crisis caused by the COVID pandemic, the League joined other organizations asking the House and Senate to pass legislation that provided state and local aid for essential services. Along with public health advocacy groups expressing grave concerns regarding the US Government's decision to terminate relations with the World Health Organization (WHO)

In early 2021, LWVUS joined an amicus brief in support of plaintiffs in a trio of US Supreme Court cases challenging the imposition of work requirements on Medicaid recipients. We joined LWVTN in contacting the Director of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) opposing the approval of a Medicaid block grant in Tennessee that would limit the state's ability to provide access to critical healthcare.

The League lobbied Congress in 2022 to take action to improve health care affordability and address health inequities impacting women and families.

At Convention 2022, delegates concurred with the LWVNY Health Care update, amending the LWVUS Health Position to include updated criteria for evidence-based cost control measures that don't exacerbate DEI disparities, highlight the need for access to healthcare for underserved areas, patients, and populations to improve both equity and public health, and make LWV support for single payer explicit, including allowing states or regions to enact universal health programs that meet certain criteria. The new position also supports separating access to health care from employment, expanding delivery options, ensuring safe staffing, centering the decisions of patients including decisions made prior to need, regular evaluation of health programs, and public participation in determining health care funding and coverage.

## Immigration

### The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Immigration, as announced by the national board, April 2008:*

**The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.**

**The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the United States.**

**To complement these goals, the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.**



In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for individuals already living in the country without legal permission to earn legal status.

The League supports federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

### *Criteria for Legal Admission to the United States*

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- Family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens.
- Flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries.
- Economic, business, and employment needs in the United States.
- Education and training needs of the United States.
- Educational program opportunities.
- Lack of a history of major and/or violent criminal activity.

### *Administration and Enforcement*

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment.

The League supports:

- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status.
- Verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers.
- Significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers.
- Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies.
- More-effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States.
- Increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the United States to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

### *US Residents Without Legal Permission to Earn Legal Status*

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for individuals living in the country without legal permission to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, studying civics, and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting these immigrants who have no history of major and/or violent criminal activity.

## **League History**

The 2006 Convention voted to undertake a study on immigration. After study and consensus, the new position was finalized in 2008 and sent to members of Congress.

In the 111th Congress (2009 – 2011), the League lobbied in support of the *DREAM Act* (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) that would provide a path to citizenship for young immigrants who complete a college degree or serve in the military, thereby enabling them to be a fully productive part of American society. The legislation passed the House but lacked enough votes to overcome a filibuster in the Senate.



Because of a request made in 2016, the League clarified part of its position on immigration “to mean that simple illegal re-entry is not considered a ‘serious crime’ for League advocacy purposes.”

In the 115th Congress (2017 – 2019), the League opposed the rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy by the Trump administration. In response, the League again advocated for passage of a clean *DREAM Act* in Congress. The LWVUS Lobby Corps lobbied both the House and the Senate on this issue.

The League also opposed the *Securing America’s Future Act of 2018*, which would have put immigrant youth at risk of deportation while supporting actions at our borders to separate children from their families and funding a wall at our southern border. During the 2018 Convention in Chicago, League members marched in support of immigrants and families while protesting this and other pieces of related legislation.

The League also opposed the Trump administration’s Public Charge Rule, which directed immigration officials to limit the entrance of immigrants who they deemed would become more dependent on government funding to meet their basic human needs.

In early 2019, LWV joined a coalition of 44 organizations to file an amicus in *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California, et al.*, a trio of cases involving whether the US Department of Homeland Security’s decision to end DACA without a pathway for DACA-eligible individuals to remain in the country legally was legal. The US Supreme Court ruled in June 2020 that DHS’s decision to end the program did not properly follow the *Administrative Procedure Act* and the majority court held that the agency failed to provide relevant factors associated with ending the program, making the agency’s actions arbitrary and capricious. LWV issued a statement commending the court on the ruling and encouraged Congress to pass comprehensive reform legislation on immigration that includes a pathway to citizenship. At the start of the 116th Congress, the League supported passage of the bipartisan *DREAM Act of 2021*. At the same time, the organization supported *The New Deal for New Americans Act*, which would expand access to citizenship, fund workforce development and English-language learning programs, and increase the number of refugees the United States resettles, while rebuilding the capacity and infrastructure of local communities to welcome refugees.

In early 2021, the League joined immigrant rights advocates in successfully urging senators to oppose amendments denying economic impact payments to mixed-immigration-status families. The League also asked the Biden administration to uphold basic due process and human rights for Haitians seeking asylum at the US border. At the same time, the League asked the administration to provide Temporary Protected Status or Deferred Enforced Departure for Cameroonians living in the US. The League urged the administration to designate Mexico for Temporary Protected Status.

## Meeting Basic Human Needs

### The League’s Position

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*Statement of Position on Meeting Basic Human Needs, as revised by the national board, January 1989, based on positions reached from 1971 through 1988:*



The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that one of the goals of social policy in the United States should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most-effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty.

Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and access to health care.

The federal government should set minimum, uniform standards and guidelines for social welfare programs and should bear primary responsibility for financing programs designed to help meet the basic needs of individuals and families. State and local governments, as well as the private sector, should have a secondary role in financing food, housing, and health care programs. Income assistance programs should be financed primarily by the federal government with state governments assuming secondary responsibility.

### *Preventing and Reducing Poverty*

In order to prevent or reduce poverty, LWVUS supports policies and programs designed to increase job opportunities; increase access to health insurance; provide support services such as child care and transportation; provide opportunities and/or incentives for basic or remedial education and job training; decrease teen pregnancy; and ensure that noncustodial parents contribute to the support of their children.

### *Access to Health Care*

LWVUS believes that access to health care includes the following: preventive care, primary care, maternal and child health care, emergency care, catastrophic care, nursing home care, and mental health care, as well as access to substance abuse programs, health and sex education programs, and nutrition programs.

### *Access to Transportation*

LWVUS believes that energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and will continue to examine transportation policies in light of these goals.

## **Further Guidelines and Criteria**

### *Criteria for Income Assistance*

- Eligibility of all low-income individuals for assistance should be based on need. Eligibility should be established through simplified procedures such as a declaration of need, spot-checked in a manner similar to that used in checking the validity of income tax returns.
- Benefit levels should be sufficient enough to provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing, and shelter. Minimum income standards should be adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living and should be revised periodically to take into account changes in the purchasing value of the dollar. Until a federal welfare program achieves an adequate level of benefits, some states will need to supplement federal payments.
- There should be increasing emphasis on cash assistance, but in-kind assistance (e.g., food stamps, housing subsidies, medical aid) should be continued to help assure that these needs are met.
- Under a revised program, participants should not have their benefits reduced.
- Privacy of participants should be protected. All administrative procedures should be conducted with respect for the rights and dignity of the individuals.



- Work should be encouraged: participants' total income should increase as earnings increase. Counseling, realistic training for actual jobs, and financial incentives should be the links between job programs and income assistance.

### **Criteria for Supportive Services**

- Supportive services should be available — but not compulsory — for participants in income assistance programs. Most important among these are child care, counseling, transportation, family planning, health care, and legal services.
- Fees for supportive services should be based on ability to pay and be free where necessary.
- Facilities and services for participants should be the same as for the general public.
- The federal government should exert leadership in setting standards for eligibility, the quality of services, and adequate funding.
- Participants in the programs should be included in program development and implementation, and the administration of social services programs should be responsive to the needs of the people being served.
- Wherever possible, these services should be conveniently located in the neighborhood.
- Transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and should also provide energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation.
- Government programs that require recipients of assistance to engage in work-related programs would be acceptable only if the following protections are guaranteed to the participants:
  - Job training.
  - Basic education.
  - Exemptions for primary care givers.
  - Supplemental support services such as child care and transportation.
  - Equitable compensation to ensure that program participants earn the same wages and benefits as other employees performing similar work.
  - A disregard of some earned income for purposes of calculating benefit levels.

### **Criteria for Housing Supply**

- The following considerations can be applied to programs and policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family:
- The responsibility for achieving national housing goals rests primarily with the federal government, which should:
  - Assure that our economic system is functioning to produce and maintain sufficient decent housing for citizens at all income levels.
  - Compensate for any failure or inadequacy of the system by building, financing, renting, and selling homes to those citizens whose housing needs are not being met.
  - Give a variety of incentives to local jurisdictions to encourage them to provide within their boundaries an adequate supply of decent housing for low- and moderate-income groups.
  - Withhold federal funds from communities that fail to encourage such housing.
- State and local governments should assist by establishing effective agencies to aid, promote, coordinate, and supplement the housing programs of the federal government and the private sector.
- Government at all levels must make available sufficient funds for housing-assistance programs.
- When families or individuals cannot afford decent housing, government should provide assistance in the form of income and/or subsidized housing.

- Government programs providing subsidies to the building, financing, and insuring industries for housing for lower income families should be evaluated in terms of units produced rather than in terms of benefits accruing to these industries.
- Government at all levels should develop policies that will assure sufficient land at reasonable cost on which to develop housing and that will assure fulfillment of other goals such as access to employment, preservation of open space, environmental cleanliness and beauty, and other aspects of a suitable living environment.
- Regional and metropolitan planning should be promoted to prevent haphazard urban growth, and housing for low and moderate income families should be provided as a part of all planned neighborhoods or communities.
- Lower income families should not be segregated in large developments or neighborhoods. As their economic status improves, lower income families should be enabled to continue to live in the same units as private tenants or as homeowners, if they are so inclined.
- Housing should be designed to meet human needs and should be built with amenities that will encourage economic integration within apartment buildings as well as within neighborhoods.
- Publicly assisted housing should be included in viable, balanced communities, with provision for quality public services and facilities (e.g., schools, transportation, recreation) that will encourage integration and stability.
- Zoning practices and procedures that will counteract racial and economic isolation should be promoted.
- State and local governments should adopt and enforce:
  - Uniform building codes with standards based on performance.
  - Housing codes to protect the health and safety of all citizens.
- State and local tax structures should be examined and revised to:
  - Benefit communities that build housing for lower-income families.
  - Encourage private owners to improve their homes.
  - Reduce speculative land costs.
- Government, industry, and labor should encourage innovative building techniques to reduce the cost of housing production.
- Rights of tenants to negotiate for proper maintenance, management of facilities, and services should be protected.
- Housing programs should be administered by individuals trained for the jobs and sympathetic with the needs of their clientele.
- Citizen groups should participate in the development of publicly assisted housing programs by:
  - Evaluating performance.
  - Activating nonprofit sponsorships.
  - Supporting legislation.
  - Developing public awareness of housing discrimination and need.

## League History

After adopting the Meeting Basic Human Needs position in 1988, the League reorganized the Social Policy program in 1990. This reorganization combined several existing positions to address the basic needs of all people for food, shelter, and access to health care and transportation. The Meeting Basic Human Needs position encompasses previous positions on income assistance and transportation. The issue of housing supply was separated from the fair housing position, still under Equality of Opportunity, and put under the Meeting Basic Human Needs position.



In 2015, the LWWUS Board voted to interpret the Meeting Basic Human Needs Position to include support for a living wage. After considerable program debate at the 2014 LWWUS convention, the Advocacy Committee took up the issue and agreed to call attention of Leagues to the Meeting Basic Human Needs position to suggest that the position can be used in communities in “working toward an income that meets basic human needs.” Additionally, the Committee agreed that specific issues in relation to a living wage and income levels should be decided by Leagues working in their communities.

### ***Income Assistance***

The 1970 Convention adopted a study of alternatives to welfare. As a result of the study, members agreed to support a system of federalized income assistance. The position, adopted in 1971, suggests criteria for such a system and for minimum uniform standards of eligibility for both cash benefits and supportive services (in-kind benefits). The position is closely linked with the Employment position in encouraging work and in emphasizing the responsibility of the federal government to help those who can't find work, those whose earnings are insufficient to meet basic needs, and those who are unable to work.

Adoption of the position coincided with a congressional effort to make major changes in the welfare system in 1971 - 72. The League mounted an all-out lobbying effort, despite recognized shortcomings in the legislation. In the late 1970s, the League attempted unsuccessfully to strengthen a number of federal welfare reform proposals. The League has supported a variety of specific programs for income assistance and in-kind benefits – food stamps, low-income energy assistance, child-care legislation, reform of unemployment compensation and Aid to Families with Dependent Children programs, and housing subsidies. Comprehensive child care remains an elusive but critically needed support service for women seeking employment. In each case, the League has pressed for uniform minimum federal standards of eligibility, uniform standards for benefits based on need, and standards for quality of services.

The League has opposed cutoffs of Medicaid funding for abortion, on the basis of the supportive services provisions of the Income Assistance position and because such actions clearly discriminate against economically disadvantaged women and people who can become pregnant.

In the 1980s, national League action on income assistance focused primarily on opposition to funding cutbacks, dilution of the federal role, and changes in eligibility requirements for income maintenance programs and support services.

In 1986 - 88, the League worked in support of welfare reform legislation in Congress, culminating in passage of the *Family Support Act of 1988*. The League had supported the House version, the *Family Welfare Reform Act*, which included provisions for education, training, and employment of welfare recipients. The final bill followed the Senate version, which the League joined the national Coalition on Human Needs to oppose, citing inadequate funding and mandatory participation quotas. Since passage of the Act, states continue to face implementation decisions.

The League lobbied successfully in support of the *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*, designed to guarantee workers unpaid leave for illness or the birth or adoption of a child. Through the years, the League has supported the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as a necessary form of income assistance.



Other League efforts include lobbying the 102nd Congress (1991 – 1993) to pass the *Mickey Leland Hunger Relief Act* and the *Freedom from Want Act*, both designed to alleviate hunger in the United States. In 1988 – 90, LWVEF coordinated an 18-month Hunger Advocacy Project designed to help state and local Leagues develop and carry out model, targeted activities to document or alleviate hunger. A guide, *Fighting Hunger in Your Community*, provided information on replicating such activities.

In 1989 – 90, LWVEF promoted discussion of a Ford Foundation report on social welfare, *The Common Good*. Local Leagues held three regional workshops on issues raised in the report and conducted related community education activities.

The League actively opposed welfare reform legislation proposed in the 104th Congress (1995 – 1997). During summer 1996, the White House and Congress agreed on legislation to essentially hand over welfare to the states. Despite the League's strong lobbying effort with a particular focus on the President, the bill was passed and signed into law in August 1996. State Leagues across the country monitored the implementation and effects of reform efforts at the state level to ensure that the benefits were provided where needed and that recipients' civil rights were protected.

In fall 2005, the League responded to the Hurricane Katrina disaster, urging Congress to protect basic human needs of those affected by securing essentials – jobs, income when work is not available, health care, food, education, child care, and housing – while also protecting and expanding the capacity of the federal government to respond by preserving and increasing funding for vital services and not sapping revenues through misdirected tax cuts.

As the 113th Congress (2013 – 2015) cut funding and changed eligibility formulas for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), (formerly the Food Stamp program), the League joined with other organizations to urge Congress to strengthen the program, not weaken it.

### **Housing Supply**

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the League worked for a number of federal housing reforms. In 1974, League support was channeled into aspects of the *Housing and Community Development Act*, which consolidated federal assistance under a block grant approach. The League fought against congressional action to weaken the Community Development Block Grant program through drastic cuts in the full range of authorized low- and moderate-income subsidies for both rehabilitation and new housing.

Throughout the 1980s, the League continued to support increased funding to add to and maintain the existing stock of federally assisted housing people with very low incomes. LWVUS efforts included working as a member of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition to urge passage of 1987 legislation authorizing the Department of Housing and Urban Development's low-income housing and community development programs, as well as endorsing the 1989 Housing Now march on Washington.

As a member of the Low-Income Housing Coalition's Women and Housing Task Force, LWVUS endorsed recommendations predicated on the conviction that every person and family should have decent, safe, affordable housing. State and local Leagues have worked to increase the supply of housing for people with low and moderate incomes through efforts to change zoning laws and set up shared housing services.





In 2002, LWVUS formally endorsed legislation to establish the National Housing Trust Fund, using surplus funds from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to create new housing for families with low incomes.

## Transportation

LWVUS concern about public transportation grew out of efforts on behalf of equal opportunity for employment and housing. The 1971 Air Quality position added another dimension to this concern by urging “measures to reduce vehicular pollution . . . and development of alternate transportation systems.” In 1972, the LWVUS Board responded to questions of interpretation by synthesizing the two positions into a unified Transportation position. In 1976, following League concurrence on the Energy Conservation position, the LWVUS Board reaffirmed the national League’s Transportation position. In 1979, the Urban Policy position reinforced the theme that federal aid for highway construction should be reduced; the Transportation position language was revised to make that point clear.

The League first put the position to work by backing a national coalition’s efforts to amend the *Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972* to permit financing part of the costs of urban mass transit from highway trust funds. The League also supported the *National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974*. Later the focus shifted to prevent stalling or cutting of federal assistance to mass transit systems.

In response to the urgency to improve and promote public transportation systems, the 1980 Convention voted to give greater emphasis to the Transportation position. In 1988, it was incorporated into the Meeting Basic Human Needs position. Leagues continue to use the Transportation position with their own local or Inter-League Organization (ILO) positions to back local and regional moves to improve mass transit and support other alternatives, such as express lanes for buses and carpools.

# Child Care

## The League’s Position

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*Statement of Position on Child Care, as adopted by the 1988 Convention, based on positions reached from 1969 through 1988:*

**LWVUS supports programs, services, and policies at all levels of government to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it, in order to increase access to employment and to prevent and reduce poverty.**

## League History

The League has long recognized that child care programs are a key supportive service for families in need.

The 1988 LWVUS Convention adopted child care as a priority and separated the child care position within the Social Policy position. The League supported a compromise child care bill, signed by the President in 1990, which provided financial assistance to low incomes for child care; increased the availability of child care through resource and referral programs and training for child-care workers; and required states to establish health and safety



standards for day care. Then Leagues across the country monitored and commented on the regulatory process as the Department of Health and Human Services wrote implementing regulations.

LWVEF activities included a 1990 – 91 School-Age Child Care Project. The goal was to help local Leagues serve as catalysts in targeted communities to increase the availability of affordable, quality school-age child care for low- and moderate-income families. In 1992, LWVEF published a community action guide using the model League projects to help other communities implement similar programs.

In summer 1998, LWVUS and other groups urged congressional action on child care and the passage of a substantial increase in guaranteed funds for the Child Care Development Block Grant.

In early 2002, the League joined other groups in support of legislation to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program and provide for comprehensive reforms to help those on welfare become self-sufficient. It was not adopted.

# Early Intervention for Children at Risk

## The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Early Intervention for Children at Risk, as adopted by the 1994 Convention:*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential. The League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children. These include:**

- **Child abuse/neglect prevention.**
- **Teen pregnancy prevention.**
- **Quality health care, including nutrition and prenatal care.**
- **Early childhood education.**
- **Developmental services, emphasizing children ages 0-3.**
- **Family support services.**
- **Violence prevention.**

## League History

The position on Early Intervention for Children at Risk was adopted by concurrence at Convention 1994; it was based on state and local League work.

In 1995, LWVEF published a comprehensive kit designed to help Leagues and other groups advocate and work for children in their communities. In June 1996, the League endorsed the Stand for Children, a national day of commitment to improving the lives of children throughout the country.



# Violence Prevention

## The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Violence Prevention, as adopted by the 1994 Convention:*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States 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.**

## League History

The 1994 Convention adopted by concurrence a position on Violence Prevention, based on state and local League work. The League subsequently endorsed the *Violence Against Women Act*, which Congress passed and the President signed in 1994 as part of a comprehensive crime bill. In the 2010s, the League supported authorization of the *Violence Against Women Act* through a stand-alone bill and as a part of the appropriations process. After the *Violence Against Women Act* expired in 2019, the League joined coalition partners pushing for reauthorization of the legislation through stand-alone legislation. The League also pushed for reauthorization of the legislation through the appropriations process.

In 2019, the League supported the *International Violence Against Women Act of 2019 (IVAWA)*, which seeks to take effective action to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls around the world as a matter of basic human rights and to promote gender equality, economic growth, and improved public health around the world.

LWVUS UN Observers also hosted a forum with member of Congress in conjunction with the Interparliamentary Union on the topic of Violence Against Women Politicians. The forum provided insight on how violence against women in politics impacts democracies, discussed preventive action, and shared best practices utilized around the world.

# Gun Policy

## The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Gun Policy, as adopted by 1990 Convention and amended by the 1994 and 1998 Conventions:*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of semi-automatic/automatic weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.**

**The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education, and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.**

**The League supports strong limitations on access to semi-automatic/automatic weapons, enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.**

## League History

The 1990 Convention took the then-rare step of adopting the gun policy position by concurrence. Proponents had sent two informational mailings to all Leagues before Convention. Spirited debate on the Convention floor persuaded the Convention to concur with the statement proposed by the LWV of Illinois.

Following the Convention action, LWVUS wrote to all members of Congress announcing the League's new position on gun control and urging passage of federal legislation to control the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States. In 1991, the League joined with other organizations to support legislation banning semi-automatic assault weapons. In 1992 and 1993, the League supported congressional passage of the Brady bill, to institute a five-day waiting period and background check for the purchase of handguns. Following enactment of the Brady bill in November 1993, the League stepped up its efforts in a successful 1994 House campaign to force inclusion of the assault weapons ban in the final conference report on omnibus crime legislation.

The 1994 Convention addressed constitutional arguments affecting gun policy by voting to amend the position on gun policy based on federal court decisions limiting the meaning of the Second Amendment's "right to keep and bear arms." This section of the position was nullified by subsequent US Supreme Court decisions in *District of Columbia v. Heller* and *McDonald v. Chicago* and was removed from the position language.

Throughout 1995 – 1996, opponents of the assault weapons ban and Brady bill pushed for repeal, but the League and others convinced Congress otherwise.

The 1998 Convention again amended the position with: "The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety."

The 106th Congress (1999 – 2001) defeated LWVUS-supported gun policy measures to close major loopholes in the law: mandating background checks for all gun show purchases and child safety locks on guns.

LWVUS endorsed and League members joined the Mother's Day 2000 Million Mom March that demonstrated citizens' call for common-sense gun policy measures.

In 2004, the League voiced strong concern over the *Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act*, which would grant special protection for the gun industry by barring city, county, or individual lawsuits against gun manufacturers and dismiss pending cases.



The League supported legislation to extend the Assault Weapons Ban, which expired in September 2004. LWVUS also supported language to close the gun show loophole to require all dealers to run criminal background checks at gun shows.

In the 2000s, the League opposed congressional attempts to repeal District of Columbia gun safety laws because such action interfered with the right of self-government for DC citizens.

The League again jumped to action in the 2010s in response to a lack of congressional and executive action after a series of mass shootings across the country. The League continues pushing for passage of closing the gun show loophole, universal background checks, limiting magazine size, banning “bump stocks” and assault weapons, increasing penalties for straw purchases of guns, and funding research and reporting on gun violence in America. In the 115th Congress (2017 – 2019), the League opposed the *Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017*.

In 2018, the League endorsed the March for Our Lives rally in Washington, DC, which was organized by students around the country. The League supported the rally by encouraging our members to attend and sponsor sister marches around the country. LWVUS also used this as an opportunity to encourage our online grassroots advocacy list to contact their members of Congress regarding the need to change gun policy around the country. In the 116th Congress (2019 – 2021) the League supported the *Bipartisan Background Check Act*, and the *Background Check Expansion Act*, to require Brady background checks for all firearm transfers.

## Urban Policy

### The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Urban Policy, as announced by the national board, June 1979 and revised by the national board in 1989:*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that it is in the national interest to promote the well-being of America's cities.**

**Sharply targeted federal assistance to distressed cities should be central to this policy. The federal government should give highest priority in urban policy to measures that enhance the economic base of cities. The League also favors supplementary federal aid for cities in distressed fiscal condition and grants for program areas as strategies to counter the problems of hardship cities.**

**The fiscal health of cities depends on the active cooperation of all levels of government. The federal government should provide incentives to encourage states to take an active role in promoting the fiscal viability of their cities.**

**The League is committed to an urban environment beneficial to life and to resource management in the public interest.**



## Further Guidelines

### *Economic Development Assistance*

The cornerstone of a national urban policy is a commitment to helping cities achieve economic strength. Federal programs to encourage private reinvestment in central cities should counter an eroding tax base and provide jobs for the inner-city unemployed. Therefore, the League supports the following federal strategies:

- Target community development programs to cities most in need.
- Encourage businesses to locate or expand in distressed cities through such financial incentives as investment tax credits, loan guarantees, subsidies for hiring the long-term unemployed, and interest subsidies.
- Expand middle-income housing while not diminishing attention to low-income housing needs.
- Target federal purchasing and location of federal facilities in distressed cities.

### *General Financial Assistance*

The League supports a variety of federal strategies, including direct general assistance, targeted to distressed cities. Such a program should include aid to counter recession. In providing federal aid for particular program areas, grants offer city governments the best opportunities to meet local needs.

- In order to increase the availability of funds to city governments for capital expenditures, the federal government should use mechanisms to reduce the cost of borrowing.
- Aid to cities should include technical assistance to improve management capacity.

## League History

Recognizing that the League's program already had many urban implications, the 1976 Convention added Cities/Urban Crisis to the national program as a "specific focus for information and action on urban problems." Members examined urban connections among existing League positions in order to open new action opportunities to address the desperate plight of many urban areas.

The 1978 Convention reaffirmed the League's interest in the urban problem by adopting an "evaluation of urban policy options, with emphasis on fiscal policy." Leagues drew on their preliminary explorations of urban problems for a more structured study of the appropriate federal role in the intergovernmental responsibility for cities. In June 1979, the national board announced a new position, enabling the League to take a strong stand on targeting federal assistance to distressed cities, especially through urban economic development assistance programs to encourage private reinvestment in cities. It also supports general and targeted direct financial assistance to cities.

During the consensus process, it was made clear that restoring economic health to the nation's cities requires combined state, local, and federal government efforts. State Leagues have used the position to work for targeted state aid to distressed areas, and local Leagues have pushed for improved city management to make better use of diminishing resources.

The League's first national action campaign under the position involved the 1980 reauthorization of General Revenue Sharing (GRS). Building on the previous monitoring and action to strengthen GRS (see Equal Access position), the Urban Policy position reaffirmed support for strong civil rights, citizen participation requirements, and



auditing standards, and for a more equitable distribution of funds. The League worked with a coalition toward these ends and was successful on all but the last issue.

Under the Urban Policy position, the League supported expansion of economic development programs and the reauthorization of Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG). In efforts to bring more jobs to urban areas, the League also has supported the location of federal facilities in distressed cities.

Local and state Leagues implemented the position on the home front, fighting to save downtown businesses from extinction, commenting on local UDAG applications, working for public/private cooperation in the revitalization of city neighborhoods, and undertaking citizen education activities to spur interest in improving the quality of urban life.

In 1979, under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, LWVEF and several local Leagues worked to increase public awareness of urban problems and solutions. Another grant enabled LWVEF to sponsor an exchange between Leagues in the industrial heartland and the Sunbelt.

The 1980 Convention changed Urban Crisis to Urban Policy. A new focus on urban transportation united the League's long-time concerns about access to jobs, air quality, land use, and energy with newer concerns about urban economic development and municipal finances.

## Death Penalty

### The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Abolition of the Death Penalty, as adopted by the 2006 Convention:*

**The League of Women Voters of the United States supports the abolition of the death penalty.**

### The League's History

At Convention 2006, delegates voted to adopt a position supporting abolition of the death penalty via concurrence. Since that time, state Leagues have used the position to support initiatives to abolish the death penalty in their states.

## Sentencing Policy

### The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Sentencing Policy, as adopted by the 2012 Convention:*

**LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.**



## The League's History

At convention 2012, delegates voted to adopt a Sentencing Policy position by concurrence. The position is based on the Sentencing Policy of the LWV of the District of Columbia. In late 2013, LWVUS supported the *Smarter Sentencing Act*, a Senate bill that would reduce federal sentences for non-violent drug offenders, but the bill did not come to the Senate floor. In 2017, the League supported the *Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2017*. This legislation aimed to give judges discretion to reduce juvenile life-without-parole sentences after 20 years, allow compassionate release of more people over the age of 60, and essentially ban juvenile solitary confinement in the federal system.

# Human Trafficking

## The League's Position

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*Statement of Position on Human Trafficking, as adopted by the LWVUS 2014 National Convention:*

**The League of Women Voters opposes all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. We consider human trafficking to be a form of modern-day slavery and believe that every measure should be taken and every effort should be made through legislation and changes in public policy to prevent human trafficking. Prosecution and penalization of traffickers and abusers should be established, and existing laws should be strictly enforced. Extensive essential services for victims should be applied where needed. Education and awareness programs on human trafficking should be established in our communities and in our schools.**

## League History

At Convention 2014, a Human Trafficking position was adopted by delegates via concurrence. The League has continued to weave advocacy on this issue through our work at the United Nations.

