

WHERE WE STAND

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Position Statements of the
League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia

Adopted June, 2009

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia is a national non-partisan organization that works to promote the public interest at all levels of government - national, regional, state and local. We seek to influence public policy through education and advocacy. *Where We Stand* states the positions which have been developed as a basis for action by the members of the District of Columbia league, the local unit of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). The League never supports or opposes any political party or candidate for elective office. It does, however, take action to influence government on issues on which the League members have reached consensus. The LWVDC encourages its members to participate as individuals in the political process.

A three-step process determines the League's position on various governmental issues. First, the members decide at the Annual Meeting what the League program will emphasize for the next two years. Next, the members study, discuss and develop consensus on those selected issues over the two-year period. Finally, the Board of Directors reviews and adopts a position statement based on that consensus. Having reached consensus, we are able to take action to promote good government for the District of Columbia.

This publication has been updated to reflect current changes in systems, procedures or organizations within the D.C. government. We hope it will prove useful to our members and, equally important, to friends and prospective members who may see where the League stands and upon what authority it acts. The League's reputation and vitality rests on the basic principles of study and consensus.

Positions adopted by the National Capital Area League (LWV-NCA) and by the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) may also serve as a basis for local action.

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Position Statements for the
League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia
All existing positions reviewed January 2009.

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LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AND REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS (Adopted in the 1920s)

The LWVDC supports local self-government and representation in Congress. Our goal is the fullest possible citizen participation in and responsibility for the government of the District of Columbia and full voting representation in the Senate and House. LWVUS also supports this position.

The LWVDC supports the goals of full voting representation in both houses of Congress and the full rights of self-government for the citizens of the District, eliminating Congressional oversight. We support incremental steps to achieve these goals with the following criteria: the integrity of the District of Columbia shall be maintained; the final determination of the status of the District shall involve the participation of the citizens of the District of Columbia.

STATEHOOD (Adopted June 1993)

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia supports self-government and full voting representation in Congress for the District of Columbia, and accepts statehood as a means of achieving this goal. This position acknowledges that many serious concerns, including the economic and fiscal resources of the proposed state and the federal enclave, need to be resolved in order to make statehood a viable concept.

DISTRICT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

(Adopted March 1971)

District government officials and employees, as public servants, should demonstrate a commitment to serve the people of Washington, to consider their wishes and meet their needs.

There should be a determined effort to seek out those who need the help of government programs and to get aid to them in ways that are certain, convenient, humane and efficient.

Citizen requests for information, service and referrals should be regarded seriously. Citizens deserve a clear, direct and swift response at all times and corrective action when appropriate. Complaints should be followed up to see what actions have been taken and records of complaints should be analyzed to see

if they suggest needed changes in programs and procedures.

Citizens have a right to expect impartial and effective enforcement of laws and regulations. As a matter of principle, laws should be enforced, amended or repealed. Officials should understand that laws are passed for the benefit of the people and should be enforced in that spirit.

IMPLEMENTATION OF D.C. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS (Adopted April, 1971)

Program performance should be routinely reported to top management and programs should be regularly evaluated in terms of their achievement in meeting plans and goals. Problem areas, as well as notable successes, should be analyzed and appropriate program changes made and publicized. An actual state-of-the District of Columbia report should focus on progress made toward achieving goals, major problems and still unmet needs.

Programs which are closely related because they have similar objectives or substantially the same clientele should be studied to determine if reorganization or cooperative action would enhance effectiveness and efficiency. Creative problem-solving and consideration of alternative means should be a part of program planning to meet community needs.

ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONS

(Adopted April 1986)

Sense of neighborhood and geographical contiguity should be the principal determining factors for Single Member Districts and ANC size and boundaries. SMDs should continue to be approximately uniform in size and small enough to permit easy communication between commissioners and their constituents. It is desirable to have consistent boundaries among ANCs, SMDs, precincts, wards and also census tracts if they fit in with the neighborhood concept. The broadest possible input of residents should be sought by the Council in drawing boundary lines and setting standards.

ANCs should maintain effective and timely communication with their constituencies.

ANCs should receive sufficient funding to perform their missions. Funding should be contingent on accountability for proper records and use of funds.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

(Adopted 1967, 1972)

LWVDC supports comprehensive planning for social, economic and physical development under the direction of the Mayor.

The Mayor should insure that the functional plans of departments and agencies are coordinated to work toward community goals.

Under the Mayor's leadership, the District should participate in metropolitan and regional planning to deal with problems which cross jurisdictional boundaries. The District should have sufficient authority enabling it to be a full partner in developing such plans and in raising regionally-based revenue to support them.

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

(Adopted 1962, 1972)

A comprehensive plan for the physical development of the city – based on clearly stated policies and goals – is desirable.

Criteria for an effective comprehensive plan are:

- Service to the public rather than the private interest.
- A balance of cost and benefit. Social cost, even though it cannot be quantified, should be considered.
- Protection of the concept of neighborhoods.
- Convenience to residential neighborhoods of schools, shopping, public transportation, and other services, accessibility of employment, recreational, and cultural opportunities.
- Availability throughout the city of convenient alternatives to the use of private car, including more provisions for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Compatibility of new development (as to height, bulk, and density as well as use) with the charac-

ter and needs of the affected neighborhood.

- Preservation of historic districts and protection of the distinctive and attractive elements of the city character.
- Recognition of the social values that derive from mixed and multi-purpose use of land, buildings and public facilities.
- Emphasis on mixed functions in the downtown area, including provision of residential options and preservation of small businesses to serve a diversified population.
- Protection of all aspects of the environment. This includes land use practices, green building design and construction standards that reduce pollution and minimize harmful impacts on the environment.
- The highway and street system, as a component of overall planning, should serve the city rather than direct its development. (See also LWV-NCA positions on Transportation).

Citizen Participation

Citizens should have the opportunity to propose and evaluate standards and criteria underlying the comprehensive plan.

Changes in the comprehensive plan, in subsidiary plans and in zoning regulations and maps should be made only after citizens have had early and ample opportunity to study the proposed change and comment on it. Notification of proposed changes should be well publicized.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

(Adopted 1967)

The League supports land policies and practices in the District of Columbia that will maintain the city's role both as national capital and as urban core of the metropolitan region.

At the same time these policies should create a stable and attractive community for residents at all income levels by meeting their social, economic and environmental needs.

Features that contribute to the human scale and individuality of the city - such as its open design,

generally low profile and its architectural character - should be preserved and protected. A sense of community should be encouraged through preservation of identifiable residential neighborhoods, with a variety of housing that offers easy accessibility to the necessities and amenities of life. The city core should promote variety in shopping and services, provide residential options and offer business and employment opportunities and cultural and educational resources. Mixed use of land, buildings and facilities is urged to achieve these goals.

In the interest of maintaining a healthful and attractive physical environment, the impact of particular land use practices as they relate to climate, air quality, water quality, and general aesthetics must be weighed.

Planning and development of the city should take into consideration the best available ideas and techniques for use, design and construction and should encourage experimentation for future improvement as long as priority is given to meeting basic human needs.

To the extent that existing tax practices discourage wise use of land through encouraging speculation and accelerating deterioration, these practices should be revised. Pending such changes, city officials should develop means to assure that the city's physical development is in the public interest.

Plans, underlying standards, and criteria of projects should be subject to the approval of elected officials or their delegates. These officials should base their decisions on reliable data. They should solicit the views and comments of other DC agencies concerned with or affected by a particular proposal. The burden of proof that a particular proposal will not violate accepted criteria should be on the developer.

Planning and zoning bodies should function in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

CARE & MANAGEMENT OF DC-OWNED LANDS

History: The League of Women Voters national positions on Environmental Quality are broadly designed to achieve intelligent management of natural resources (soil, water, air and plant life) in the public interest to maintain an environment, both rural and urban, that is beneficial to life. In the District of Columbia increasing evidence of neglect prompted a League study concentrated on D.C.-owned lands,

particularly in areas that affect aesthetic and economic values in neighborhoods throughout the city. Excluded from the study were federal lands, all of which are managed by resource professionals. League concern for the absence of citizen input into planning and management of natural resources for the enhancement of the urban environment in the District of Columbia brought members to consensus and action following the study.

Statement of Position: The League of Women Voters of D.C. believes that the management of D.C.-owned lands is a vital issue, and that there should be an inventory of these lands and of the laws governing their protection and maintenance through the establishment of one department or agency responsible for their care in a coordinated and systematic program. Members also favor a citizen advisory group to recommend action on the part of resource agencies to evaluate resource needs and to recommend enforcement procedures for present laws.

INVENTORIES ARE NEEDED:

- a. To identify and locate DC-owned lands, most of which are small parcels such as triangles and circles at street intersections, median strips and other areas important to neighborhood enhancement. A map of District-owned lands should be made available to the public.
- b. To establish priorities in resource management projects for these areas.
- c. To identify and evaluate laws now in place governing the use and management of the urban environment and its natural resources.

Supervision and Enforcement

The League recommends that one department or agency of the D.C. government be responsible for a coordinated program of natural resource management. This department or agency should be directed by staff members who are technically trained and who will use expertise available to the District through federal cooperative programs, for example, the District Conservationist assigned by the Soil Conservation Service (USDA). Enforcement of present laws should also be a responsibility of the department or agency.

Citizen Participation and Education

A citizen group should be established to cooperate with ANCs to make recommendations to the Mayor and the Council relative to the management and protection of D.C.-owned lands. This group should also encourage citizen participation. Education programs should be undertaken to enable citizens to recognize neglect or mismanagement of urban lands and natural resources.

EMINENT DOMAIN

(Adopted April 1975)

The use of eminent domain is a legitimate power of government at all levels, but one that should be used with caution. Particularly in urban areas, the power to condemn land which is already under intensive use holds the possibility of substantial abuse and hardship for affected communities.

It is essential, therefore, that this power be exercised within the context of an overall land-use plan which is understood and accepted by the community. Alternative approaches to meet the recognized public need should be fully explored; however, when eminent domain is determined to be the best way to meet this objective, criteria should be established to direct the selection of the site to be taken. Just compensation must take into consideration ancillary burdens such as relocation cost for residents and businesses, as well as the value of the land taken from the owner.

DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERSIGHT

(Adopted August 1989)

The D.C. League of Women Voters encourages active legislative oversight of the executive branch of the D.C. Government to assure that government programs which the Council has approved and funded are carried out efficiently, effectively, honestly and for the purposes intended. The League considers legislative oversight of the executive branch a year-round responsibility requiring a well-informed legislature with access to independent and objective sources of information. The League considers legislative oversight to be an essential aspect of the checks and balances system which characterizes the separation of powers within the U.S. government.

Statement of General Principles Deemed Applicable to the D.C. Government

The League of Women Voters of D.C. believes that the following are general principles of legislative oversight applicable to the government of the District of Columbia.

In addition to passing laws, appropriating funds and levying taxes, oversight of the executive branch of government is one of the primary functions of a legislature. It is the means by which a legislature makes certain that the government programs it has authorized and funded are carried out efficiently, effectively, honestly and for the purposes intended by the legislation. It is an essential part of the checks and balances system which characterizes the separation of powers within the U.S. government.

Legislative oversight of the executive branch is a year-round responsibility requiring a well-informed legislature with access to independent and objective sources of information, analysis and counsel. Continuing contacts with constituents and the general public directly and through public hearings are essential sources of the information necessary to effective oversight.

Participation by a legislature in budget review as part of its responsibility for the appropriation of funds tends to be a focal point of legislative oversight and is a significant part of it. Oversight need not and should not be limited to the budget process.

Elements of oversight may include public hearings, investigative hearings, use of subpoena powers, confirmation of selected executive appointees, periodic audits and performance reviews of agencies and functions conducted directly or by legislatively-sponsored entities.

The legislature may employ a variety of strategies to help assure that the executive carries out legislative intent: requirements in law for legislative approval of rules and regulations or of shifts in the use of budgeted funds (reprogramming); requirements for periodic reporting or program evaluation; "sunset" provisions for reassessment or termination of an activity after a stated period of time; and establishment by law of financial and management systems.

Although the separation of powers in the U.S. governmental system requires "checks", it also requires "balances", imposing limitations on legislative intrusion into established areas of executive prerogative. Despite these limitations, which are developed

through law and judicial interpretation, the experience of state and local governments in this country has demonstrated that there are many acceptable and effective ways of conducting oversight within constitutional bounds.

GOVERNMENT INTEGRITY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (Adopted July 1990)

The LWVDC supports measures to ensure the integrity of the District's Home Rule government, including more effective use of existing "watchdog" protection for "whistleblowers", improved Council oversight, and an elected District Attorney to enforce D.C. criminal law.

Existing "watchdog" agencies and "whistleblower" protections should be used more fully and made more effective. The Council should enact stronger "whistleblower" protection.

The Council should hold more investigative hearings in order to determine that the programs it has authorized and funded are being carried out honestly.

The Council should consider how the authority of the D.C. Auditor might be strengthened to satisfy the goals of improved oversight. The League endorses the recommendations made by the Council-appointed panel in 1987. We further recommend that the Council consider giving the D.C. Auditor the power to take testimony from D.C. government officials in connection with conducting audits.

The League supports the "Home Rule agenda" for the District of Columbia, which includes replacing the U.S. Attorney with an elected District Attorney to enforce D.C. criminal law. Further, the League believes that the Charter-mandated annual audit by the General Accounting Office is superfluous and ought to be eliminated.

ELECTION PROCESS

Initiative Process (Adopted October 1985)

LWVDC supports the initiative process and makes the following recommendations:

- Filing dates should allow ample time for voter information and discussion.

- An official voter information pamphlet should be mailed to all voters.
- Initiatives should be limited to ballots at the general election held in even-numbered years.

Voting Process (Adopted October 1985)

LWVDC supports voting by mail, in specific circumstances.

LWVDC unanimously supports requiring the Board of Elections and Ethics to maintain an up-to-date list of registered voters.

Public Financing of Local Elections (Adopted March 1974)

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia supports public financing of local election campaign expenses. We favor the matching-end concept of controlling the public share of election campaign costs

FEDERAL BLOCK GRANTS FOR THE DISTRICT (Adopted January 1985)

The D.C. Council should establish a special legislative committee to review block grants and assign more specific oversight responsibilities to its committees on Human Services and Education. The Mayor must provide to the Council information on the amount and the allocation of block grant funds and a detailed accounting of how block grant funds were actually spent.

The Administration should widely publicize Intended Use Plans for block grant funds using civic organizations, church groups, ANCs and the news media. The Administration should establish procedures for regular administrative hearings and maintain this schedule. The D.C. League supports the Mayor's Block Grants Advisory Committee, which should include community members, professionals and clients of services. General recommendations of the advisory committees should be publicized through the previously defined channels, and the disposition of such recommendations also should be made public. A single advisory committee for Health and Human Services, with subcommittees, should be maintained with the responsibility for recommending increases or decreases in funding for specific programs.

The Administration, Council, advisory committees, citizens groups and ANCs should all be involved with the evaluation of services. Improved data collection procedures should be implemented and written criteria for evaluation should be established. Direct information from clients should be included in the process.

FINANCE AND REVENUE

Budgeting (Adopted April 1971)

Budgeting should allocate available financial resources among government programs so that the greatest progress toward community goals can be made in the most cost-effective manner

A fully and publicly justified budget should reflect a true picture of the District's current needs and long-range objectives supported by revenue sources and tax measures adequate to finance it.

Congressional action on the budget should be completed before the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Information about the costs and benefits of all programs, including federal programs, which affect the District, is essential to making wise decisions for allocation of resources. Documentation of such matters as expenditures, workload, achievements and failures should accompany budget requests and be available for consideration by the public and public officials.

All expenditures should be reviewed and reappraised on a continuing basis.

Attempts should always be made to maximize the proportion of expenditures, which provide for the services, protection and welfare of the community and to minimize the costs of administration and overhead consistent with effective service.

Revenue (Adopted March 1970)

The League believes that the tax structure and tax base should be improved and expanded.

Proposed tax measures should be judged both individually and as a part of the tax package as a whole.

Adequacy of yield and economic and social effects should be primary considerations in reaching decisions on revenue questions.

Additional factors to be weighed are whether a tax is equitable, certain, convenient, economic to administer and whether the tax structure as a whole is progressive.

The relationship of the District to the suburbs in both tax rates and total tax burden also should be considered.

FORMS OF TAXATION AS REVENUE SOURCES

Income Tax

The League supports substantial reliance on the income tax because income is a reflection of ability to pay.

We support, in principle, the use of the federal income tax system as a basis for reporting and calculating District income taxes to facilitate administration.

We also advocate removing the exemption for non-residents from the income tax law so that non-residents pay District income taxes at the full rate on their earnings in the District with a credit from their home state.

Sales Tax

The League believes the District's general sales tax rate should not exceed the sales tax rates in the surrounding areas.

Proposed increases and expansions of the tax should also be judged by the criteria above.

We are strongly opposed to a sales tax on food for off-premises consumption and on drugs, both of which fall heavily on low-income families.

We support taxes on luxury items.

Property Taxes

The League believes that the District must consider its real and personal property taxes vis-à-vis the surrounding areas. The effects of proposed changes on population, business distribution and on property development and maintenance should be considered.

Unincorporated Business Income Tax

The unincorporated business income tax should include the professions, with appropriate credit allowed on the personal income tax.

Use Tax

The League favors a use tax on organizations exempt from the property tax as a form of payment toward the city services they receive.

Unrelated Profit-making Activities

Tax-exempt non-profit organizations should be required to pay both income tax and real property taxes on their unrelated profit-making activities just as commercial enterprises must.

Other Taxes

A tax on parking, particularly all-day parking, should be considered. Bridge tolls might be other sources of revenue.

OTHER REVENUE SOURCES

Federal Payment

The federal payment should be regarded as an obligation of the federal government to the District due to the special relationship of the federal government to the nation's capital.

This payment should be independent of any other federal funding of specific District projects.

In setting the amount of the payment, consideration should be given to such factors as the potential tax value of property owned by the federal government and other tax-exempt organizations; services and facilities which must be provided to such governmental and other organizations, and to their clients and employees; the restrictions on industry and commercial building in the District which have limited the tax base; the constitutional limit on the area of the District which prevents expansion; congressional limitation on the District's powers to tax and borrow; and the services which the District must provide which are ordinarily performed elsewhere by counties and states.

See LWV-NCA position.

Borrowing Authority

The League supports flexible borrowing authority which will enable the District to finance its capital improvement needs within the limits imposed by its financial capabilities.

Grants-in-Aid

The District should be entitled to participate in any federal programs for which there are grants-in-aid to states or municipalities and have the authority to seek those grants which would further its own priorities.

Revenue-sharing Systems

The District should be entitled to participate in revenue sharing on a basis which gives due recognition to its state, county, and city responsibilities.

Area-wide Financing

Coordinated plans and programs of area and regional concern should be supported with area-wide financing.

Earmarking Revenue

Earmarking revenue limits flexibility in the use of funds to meet the priority needs of the community. Any earmarking should be for a limited time only and should be subject to frequent review to determine if the circumstances which led to earmarking still pertain.

AGING

Care of Aging (Adopted July 1979)

The District of Columbia government should support development of a continuum of care for the elderly which will enable them to remain in their homes as long as possible and avoid premature or inappropriate institutionalization. Recipients should pay for services according to their ability.

There should be centralized and coordinated planning and advocacy, information and referral by trained or experienced personnel, and a comprehensive single entry system for assessment of individual needs, including counseling and planning appropriate services, linkage to and assurance of delivery of services and monitoring and evaluation to assure adequacy and quality of service.

The District of Columbia government should establish standards for and/or require accreditation of agencies providing in-home services.

The District of Columbia government should enact appropriate legislation to permit intervention to provide protective services for the elderly with proper safeguards for the rights of the individual.

Housing Options for Older Persons
(Adopted November 1985)

The League supports the availability of various housing options for older persons. These options include congregate housing, group homes, shared housing and accessory apartments. It supports the legalization and encouragement of accessory apartments in all parts of the city. Accessory apartments should be allowed only in an owner occupied house and there should be a permit process in order to install an accessory unit.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION
(Adopted 1964, 1968, 1970, 1990)

The League actively supports policies to eliminate segregation and discrimination.

CHILDREN AT RISK
(Adopted November 1995)

The District of Columbia League will take action under the LWV-US positions that support programs

aimed at children at risk, and also where the LWVDC believes that specific problems in the District of Columbia should be addressed.

Services to children and families should be integrated to provide all family preservation and support services under one organizational unit.

To promote the optimal mental and physical development of our children, high priorities should be given to funding for children's programs; for example, Healthy Start, Head Start, early childhood education, Medicaid for children, or comparable programs.

Parenting education should be provided for school-age children and parents.

The schools should be community centers with appropriate and adequate staffing for the delivery of social and health services year round, including a counselor/social worker for each school, training in conflict resolution and vocational training for today's job market.

Citizen groups should monitor the media to organize public pressure for more wholesome programming directed at children.

CONSUMER PROTECTION
(Adopted March 1972)

Consumer protection and enforcement mechanisms should include the following major functions and responsibilities:

- Power to enforce consumer protection laws.
- Continuous review of consumer protection laws with the purpose of improving and enforcing them.
- Licensing retailers of goods and services, excluding those licenses which are issued by other legally authorized agencies.
- Mediation of disputes with enforcement powers.
- Referral to appropriate agencies for investigations, as necessary.
- Use of volunteer assistance in educating the public both in and out of schools.
- Decentralization of services for the citizens.

- Cooperation with other agencies that offer consumer programs.
- Collection and dissemination of consumer information.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Correctional Institutions

(Adopted March 1973; Revised 2009)

In 1997 Congress transferred the DC correctional institutions and rehabilitative programs directly to the authority of the federal government due to financial constraints. Under the direction of the federal Bureau of Prisons, US Parole Commission and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, a variety of initiatives have been introduced. Although these agencies make a concerted effort, these programs are not adequately preparing the residents of the correctional institutions to re-enter the mainstream of society.

In this regard, the Department of Corrections should have the following enabling responsibilities to:

- gear programs to prepare a resident for release;
- develop specialized techniques for motivating residents to participate in rehabilitative programs;
- expand and improve counseling services;
- provide continuing evaluation to determine if the programs should be deleted, expanded or maintained in their present form;
- require special training of all personnel engaged in programs;
- upgrade salaries in order to attract better qualified personnel;
- improve the method of selection of residents for the various programs.

Present custodial facilities should not be expanded until all alternatives have been explored. The Department of Corrections should emphasize community-based facilities and set up guidelines which would be strictly adhered to by all halfway houses. In each halfway house there should be a qualified director, a medical team and job counselors, who

should have the responsibility of servicing only community-based facilities.

The Department of Corrections should explore the feasibility of using Junior Village buildings or other D.C. government-owned facilities. Community-based facilities should be dispersed throughout the city. Lorton should remain under the jurisdiction of the D.C. government.

Criminal Sentencing (Adopted April 1982)

The primary goal of imprisonment should be the protection of society. Rehabilitation of the individual wrongdoer and deterrence of others are also important. In the District of Columbia, however, imprisonment serves mainly as a punishment and does little to achieve these goals.

Improvements are needed in our criminal justice system, but a law mandating imprisonment would not be an improvement and would not be an effective or appropriate tool of the criminal justice system.

Alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. Sentences should be tailored to fit both the crime and the individual wrongdoer. Judges should retain discretion to tailor sentences in this way.

The League does not support mandatory sentences at this time.

Some means of prohibiting or lessening plea-bargaining should be explored.

Suspended sentences, except in very rare and special instances, should be prohibited.

The League believes the prison population should be reduced and does not favor building additional prisons. Rather, the focus should be on developing more constructive methods of combating crime. These should include increased attention to improving education and training programs, more effective handgun and narcotics abuse control, and sentencing reform.

GUN CONTROL (Adopted 1975)

LWVDC supports the strengthening of gun control law in the District of Columbia. This should be in the

form of stricter enforcement of present laws and regulations as well as additional legislation. Laws to control all firearms should be strengthened, but especially handguns.

The law should specify conditions for the storage of firearms and ammunition in carefully controlled and secured areas.

The manufacture and assembly of firearms and ammunition in the District should be prohibited.

The basic penalties should be increased for illegally possessing or carrying any dangerous weapon or for using or having available a gun during the commission of a crime.

Alternative methods of law enforcement, such as unarmed police, need more study.

Publicity campaigns should be mounted using all media to educate the general public regarding the law and the dangers of owning guns. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of programs in the schools to educate young people to the dangers of guns.

The District should continue to revise and strengthen its laws and regulations with respect to the control of firearms and encourage surrounding jurisdictions to have similar strict laws and enforcement. Therefore, it is essential that a solution be sought at regional and national levels.

EDUCATION

The District of Columbia Public Education Reform Act of 2007:

- established the DC Public Schools as a cabinet – level agency subordinate to the Mayor;
- created a Chancellor of the DC Public schools;
- established a Department of Education headed by a Deputy Mayor for Education; and
- established a new State Board of Education.

State Board of Education

State Board of Education replaced the former DC Board of Education. Among their many duties, the board members are responsible for advising the state superintendent of education on academic standards, teacher accreditation and certification stan-

dards, and policies for parental involvement and rules for enforcing school attendance requirements.

The nine member State Board consists of eight members representing each District ward and one at-large member. The board selects a president from its members.

Elementary and Secondary Education

(Adopted February 1971) (Revised April 2000; April 2009)

The mayor has authority over school curriculum, operations personnel and facilities.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum should be clearly relevant to the world in which the student lives.

The curriculum must provide a logical sequence of learning which extends from early childhood to the time when the student is equipped with marketable skills or the prerequisites for additional education. Standards for advancement should be adhered to. Creativity in the classroom should be encouraged. Suitable evaluation should be built into every program. Ineffective programs should be eliminated.

Vocational and other career training programs should be available to meet the current needs. Skills should be taught in a framework broad enough to be adapted to changing technologies and job markets.

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Teacher applicants should meet professional standards. Provisions should be made, however, to permit the hiring of persons of extraordinary qualifications and/or experience.

Superior performance by teachers should be rewarded, and superior teachers should be encouraged to remain in the classroom. Teachers should be encouraged to act on their own initiative to increase their skills and knowledge.

Continued growth for teachers must be assured by provision of meaningful orientation and staff development programs. In-service training of teachers should be regarded as an on-going responsibility of the school system.

Part-time teachers and teacher aides are desirable.

VOUCHERS

LWVDC opposes the use of publicly funded vouchers (Federal or District monies) to enable D.C. public school students to attend private schools. Public funds should go to public schools. Instead of funding vouchers for a small percentage of public school students, priority should be given to supporting the expansion of several existing successful programs in the public schools to potentially benefit more students.

The League recognizes the value of community involvement in, and the public's sense of responsibility for, public education. The voucher process should not be forced upon the District of Columbia by Congress or the Executive. The citizens of the District of Columbia should make the decision concerning school vouchers for DC public school students.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

(Adopted April 2001)

The D.C. League of Women Voters neither supports nor opposes charter schools, since charter schools are established in the District of Columbia. All Charter Schools should have the same academic, administrative, and financial oversight regardless of the authority providing the charter.

Guidelines for D.C. Public and Charter Schools should be established.

Guidelines should be established for:

- purchases of facilities;
- lease of vacated school buildings by charter school owners;
- conversion of a traditional public school to a charter school.

Measurable standards should be established both for student achievement of basic skills as well as for carrying out the stated mission of any particular charter school.

An independent body should collect academic data for individual student achievement and make public annually the progress of each school.

Funds should be allocated to both traditional public and charter schools according to the same formula per pupil expenditure. Reallocation of funds mid-year should be dependent on enrollment.

SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICES

School Plants, Buildings and Grounds, Facilities

Long-range planning is essential to provide facilities to meet the current and future needs of the school population.

The League supports school services to the extent that it increases efficiency of operation and effectiveness of programs that provide for direct community access to and communications with responsible administrators.

Special Services

Pupil services in the areas of counseling, mental and physical health, social work and special education must be provided in such a way that they are focused on the specific needs of students and teachers. Procedures must be designed to assure that the identification of needs is followed by action. School programs designed to meet special needs and their financing should be closely coordinated with other community programs working on those same needs.

HIGHER EDUCATION

(Adopted December 1975)

The LWVDC supports publicly financed higher education in DC. The concept of a University of the District of Columbia should include various schools and colleges including a four-year program for liberal arts, sciences, and a community college. Admissions should be open to all D.C. residents with a high school diploma or its equivalent. The University should maintain high standards comparable to those of other leading state universities.

Tuition should be kept to a nominal fee with out-of-state students paying tuition comparable to tuition charged out-of-state students in state universities.

Graduate schools should be developed on a strong undergraduate base and as financing is available.

The Board of Trustees should have broad represen-

tation from diverse interests but should include people with academic expertise.

Board of Trustees guidelines should guarantee opportunity for both faculty and citizen input into Board decisions.

EMPLOYMENT

(Adopted 1971)

The District of Columbia government should provide for training, retraining, and rehabilitation to those who are unemployed or marginally employed, in order to prepare them for better-paying jobs.

Patterns and instances of all types of discrimination in employment, especially as these further aggravate the poverty cycle (low skills --unemployment--dependency), should be eliminated.

HEALTH

(Adopted April 1983)

LWVDC supports quality, affordable, and accessible health care available to all DC residents which is efficiently and economically delivered. This care should include disease prevention, health promotion and education, community-based primary care, (including prenatal, reproductive and mental health) through an integrated, cost-efficient, and culturally appropriate system.

HOUSING

(Adopted May 1978 - Revised and Expanded September 1989)

The League supports a strong commitment by the District to provide and finance affordable housing. Economically, culturally and racially diverse residential communities should be encouraged in all areas of the city, and specific requirements or goals for affordable housing should be included in the Comprehensive Plan. Tax policies should further the District's housing goals and homeownership should be encouraged. Well-managed and maintained public housing should be provided. In expanding assisted housing, the District should pursue subsidized rental assistance in housing developed by nonprofit or private organizations.

Goals

Housing policies and goals should be established and clearly identified to the general public by the District government and implemented by a single vigorous central housing agency within the District administration. Citizen involvement at all levels, especially the neighborhood level, should be encouraged and supported in the development and implementation of housing policies and program.

Planning/Diversity

Economically, culturally and racially diverse residential communities should be encouraged in all areas of the city. Public and other subsidized housing units should blend into the total community through the use of such devices as heterogeneous grouping of income levels in neighborhoods and within the same multi-family structures. The Comprehensive Plan should include specific requirements or goals for affordable housing to be incorporated into the Ward Plans.

Funding

The District should have a strong financial commitment to providing affordable housing and should effectively use all available Federal and District funds. The District should place a priority on providing financial support to nonprofit and private organizations that successfully provide affordable housing.

Displacement

Prevention and amelioration of displacement should be a goal. Measures which would be desirable as a means of assisting residents to remain in their homes include: extra concession to hardship cases due to condominium and "co-op" conversions; subsidies for low and moderate income residents; advising landlords, owner-occupants and tenants of their rights and obligations; an enlarged stock of standard rental housing; and utilization of vacant structures which otherwise detract from neighborhood safety and attractiveness.

Use of Vacant Property

The District should inventory all publicly and privately held vacant and abandoned properties (structures and land) and prepare an action plan with the primary goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing. This process should be on going.

Homeownership

Homeownership in the District for those who wish to own homes should be encouraged through counseling and assistance to tenants, tax policies to support homeownership, expansion of mortgage lending policies, and analysis of rejected housing loans. New financing methods should be established where necessary to carry out an appropriate level of support. Low and moderate-income residents should be supported with resources to obtain, rehabilitate, renovate and maintain homes.

Taxes

Tax policies should further the District's housing goals for resident homeowners and tenants who have low and moderate incomes. We support ending tax incentives which encourage investment to secure income tax or other financial advantages. We also support tax disincentives for vacant property; tax policies which promote prevention and safety, such as credit for circuit breakers; differential tax rates for business and owner-occupied homes; and improved collection of all taxes.

Public and Assisted Housing

The District should provide well-managed and maintained public housing. Concerns include reducing vacancy rates, improving rent collection, increasing social and educational services and providing a safe environment. To expand assisted housing, the District should pursue well-managed, subsidized rental assistance in housing developed by nonprofit or private organizations before pursuing construction of new public housing.

LIBRARIES

(Adopted May 2007; Revised April 2009)

The League of Women Voters believes that an excellent public library system is fundamental to our democratic form of government. Thus it supports and supplements the city educational system and encourages the free exchange of information and ideas.

Therefore, the LWVDC supports:

- publicly funded libraries;
- life-long literacy through select, age-oriented collections; and
- collections and services that meet the educa-

tional and leisure interests of the District's diverse populations.

The League expects library buildings to be:

- conveniently located throughout the city;
- open a wide range of hours;
- comfortable and well-maintained.

Libraries should be managed and staffed by courteous employees trained to current professional standards. The mayor is encouraged to nominate members of the library Board of Trustees who will provide a range of management and advocacy expertise.

RECREATION

(Adopted 1968)

We support adequately funded and staffed quality recreation programs and facilities for the District of Columbia.

INCOME MAINTENANCE

(Adopted 1962; Amended 2009)

We support income maintenance and other anti-poverty measures to eliminate destitution and promote individual and family stability.

Public Assistance should be extended to unemployed and underemployed employables.

Assistance grants should be increased to meet cost-of-living indices.

Additional professional and clerical staff should be hired to allow reduction of caseload size and to promote genuine casework service. This applies particularly to Public Assistance and Child Welfare.

The Income Maintenance Department should develop a plan to provide training for social workers.

Social workers should be allowed discretion to initiate information and referral of clients for family planning services.

A publicly supported day care program should be initiated; one which conforms to Federal requirements for matching funds and provides proper safeguards for the welfare of both mothers and children.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

(Adopted 1975)

A comprehensive program for the conservation of energy should embrace the following features:

- Continuing citizen involvement in the development of objectives and program content;
- Informational and advisory assistance to alert individuals, businesses and institutional consumers to the need for and the means of conserving energy;
- Support for the establishment and administration of standards for energy saving and efficiency in the construction and use of buildings.

The LWVDC supports a system of charging for energy that:

- encourages conservation and discourages unnecessary use;
- encourages electricity users to shift from peak-load hours to non-peak periods by use of differentiated rates according to time of day and year and other factors, and;
- provides for pollution abatement with the best available technology for meeting applicable emission standards.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Public policy should insure environmental quality by fully considering the effects of transportation service and plans on health and safety, neighborhood and community livability, and aesthetics.

Smoking in Public Places

(Adopted March 1976)

The LWVDC interpretation of the LWVUS position in support of clean air includes support of realistic and enforceable measures for the regulation of smoking in order to protect the health of nonsmokers, particularly those members of our population suffering from respiratory ailments.

Solid Waste Management

(Adopted June 1972, Amended 2009)

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia supports action by the city to bring about a reduction in the amount of solid waste at its point of

origin.

The League regards the efficient and equitable collection of all residential wastes as a basic responsibility of the city.

The League supports the concept and practice of reuse and recycling as significant ways to conserve resources and reduce disposal requirements.

Recognizing that all disposal involves some environmental degradation, the League believes that the system selected should be the least destructive of our environment and of our resources, even at additional cost.

We continue to support reuse and recycling, and accept the need for measures such as sanitary landfill and municipal incineration as reclamation technology evolves.

TRANSPORTATION

(Adopted 1963; Amended 2009)

The League supports improved transportation service, including rapid rail transit and buses. A standard price, safety, frequency, general attractiveness and general availability of service at all hours are required if public transportation is to become a realistic alternative to the use of private vehicles.

It should be public policy to provide adequate public transportation, through Metro, that discourages automobile use. This policy can be implemented by such actions as immediate improvement in bus service, increased use of fringe parking lots, encouragement of car pools by employers, and provision of adequate facilities for bicyclists.

Additional freeway construction will compound rather than solve problems of development in the Washington area.

Air quality standards should be immediately established and enforced.

Open space and unique natural features of the city should be preserved.

Initial planning of transportation services should fully consider the price and impact on the total environment. Disruption of neighborhoods, destruction of homes and businesses, and displacement of people should be prevented if possible. Disruption should be avoided where possible and financially compensated.

See the LWV-NCA Transportation positions.

Mission

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia is a political non-partisan organization encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase understanding of public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

Vision

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among levels of government, effective enforcement and well-defined channels for citizen input and review.