



Where We Stand Positions on Issues 2023 – 2025

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Introduction

Where We Stand is the platform of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and is designed to be used in conjunction with the LWVUS publication [Impact on Issues](#). Taken together, these positions and the League Principles form the basis for all action carried out by the League in Pennsylvania on state and national issues.

The book is organized in three topic sections: **Representative Government, Natural Resources, and Social Policy.**

Because League leaders often take action on issues based on a combination of state and national positions:

- This document begins with a summary of LWVUS positions in each of the three topics
- Each section lists the LWVPA position in detail.
- Most positions contain a brief background, including when and why it was adopted.

Details of LWVUS positions can be found in [Impact on Issues](#). *Impact on Issues* also contains a section on International Relations. There is no comparable section in *Where We Stand*.

Taking Action on State/National Positions

The League is a complex organization with positions at local, state, and national levels, but always speaking with one voice. To that end, a clear understanding of state and national League positions, how they interrelate, and how they can complement and reinforce local and regional positions is necessary before taking action at any level of government.

It is each local League's responsibility to inform LWVPA or LWVUS before it takes action on state or national issues at state or national levels. Leagues taking local action on state and national positions are encouraged to consult with the appropriate board or staff member.

Action/Education/Facilitation

Faced with an emerging issue, Leagues sometimes find they can be more effective by playing an educational or facilitative role, even when they have local, state or national positions in the issue area. Before taking action, be sure to consider the options available and what strengths your League has to offer.

LWVPA State Program: 2023-2025

League Studies and the Program Cycle Explained

Program: Program is the League term for the issues that members have chosen for study and action. At local program planning meetings, members propose topics for local, regional, state, and national programs. The proposals are submitted to the appropriate board level for approval. The board then presents a recommended program for adoption by members at the local annual meeting or by delegates to state, regional or national conventions. **The recommended program is the sum of the League's Positions (see definition below) on issues and may include proposals for study on new issues or updating previous positions.**

Study: Once an issue is chosen, a research committee gathers information for local study committees to read, consider and discuss—that is, to do a study. Local study committees may supplement the information as needed with interviews of local officials, residents, or professionals and by further fact-finding through reading and research.

Consensus: The study research committee also fashions consensus questions for discussion by the membership. Through examination of facts and discussion, a substantial agreement is reached by the members. Once members reach consensus on their responses, the appropriate board forms a position based on the consensus.

Position: A position is a statement of member agreement based on consensus and approved by the appropriate board. If the study is local, the position will be developed and submitted to the members for approval at their annual meeting. If the study is a county, state or national study, local consensus statements are forwarded to the appropriate board, which will gather and combine consensus statements from other local Leagues to form a position. This position will be presented for approval to the delegates at county, state, or national conventions.

- LWVPA positions are included in *Where We Stand*.
- LWVUS positions are included in [Impact on Issues](#)

Action: Once a position has been adopted, the League can take action on issues and legislation that relate directly to the position. Action is a continuous process of working toward goals stated in positions established by member agreement. Action may include lobbying public officials through letters or other direct contacts, testifying at public hearings, organizing public forums, and contacting media to inform voters. It is the responsibility of the appropriate board to plan and direct League action.

New Issues: In the course of taking action, through observers' reports or member interest, new issues may be encountered on which the League does not yet have a position. Then the process starts all over again on a new topic.



Program Planning and State and National Biennial Conventions: During December or January of every year, local Leagues are asked to go through a process of reviewing all current positions (National and local positions one year and State positions the alternate year) for the purpose of recommending whether to propose a new study or update or discard older positions. The recommendations are forwarded to the appropriate Board and on the recommendation of the given Board will be presented at the State or National Convention for discussion and voting.

Analysis of 2023 Program Planning Responses: 10 of 31 Pennsylvania local Leagues completed a program planning report providing recommendations to drop, update or conduct new studies. There were two recommendations to drop positions (pipelines and gambling), and 37 recommendations for position updates.

League Principles

- The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.
- The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.
- The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.
- The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.
- The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.
- The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.
- *"The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial."*

What Are the Principles?

The Principles are "concepts of government" to which the League subscribes. They serve two functions: authorization for adoption of national, state, and local program; and as a basis for taking action at the national, state, and local levels.

History

The Principles are a direct descendant of the Platform, which served from 1942-1956 as the national repository for "principles supported and positions taken by the League as a whole in

fields of government to which it has given sustained attention.” The Platform has disappeared from League vocabulary, but the Principles survived.

Taking Action

When taking action under the Principles, the appropriate board authorizes action once it determines that member understanding and agreement do exist and that action is appropriate. As with other action, when there are ramifications beyond a League’s own governmental jurisdiction, the League should consult other Leagues affected.

The Principles are broad when standing alone, so caution must be used when considering them as a basis for action. It is best to use the Principles in conjunction with League positions to which they apply.

Adopted State Program: 2023-2025

At a time when standing for basic good government practice and democratic processes is seen as partisan, keeping the League's passion and focus on core issues to defend our democracy is important.

Based on Program Planning responses from local Leagues at the beginning of 2023 and as approved by members at the 2023 Convention, LWVPA adopted changes to the following LWVPA Positions in the areas of Representative Government, Natural Resources, and Social Policy:

Marcellus Shale
Pipelines
Child Health and Welfare
Juvenile Justice

LWVPA also elected to conduct a review and revision of the following positions:
Judiciary
Pooling

LWVPA also adopted the following Concurrences:
Concurrence with NM Environmental Justice Position
Concurrence with LWVCA Climate Smart Agriculture and Food Action Policy

Further Program Recommendations

LWVPA will continue work in coordination with LWVUS League-wide Campaign for Making Democracy Work®: Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics, and Redistricting.

The LWVPA board will also provide attention to the following as the political climate provides opportunities:

In the areas of Representative Government: Election and Voting Systems, Open Primaries, Judicial Selection, Elimination of the Electoral College or passage of the National Popular Vote Compact, Legislative Rules and Collaborative Policymaking, Constitutional Amendment Processes, and Redistricting.

In the areas of Social Policy: Digital Equity, Gun Safety, Education, Fair School Funding, Criminal Justice, Reproductive Choice, Living Wage, Increasing Immigrant Access to Basic Privileges and Services

In the areas of Natural Resources: Water Conservation, Zero-Waste Initiatives, Environmental Justice

The LWVPA board will also engage in strategic collaboration with partners in Climate Change, Marcellus Shale, Broadband Access, Driver's Licensing for Undocumented Persons, and Voting Access.

According to bylaws, delegates proposed studies or updates from the floor at Convention for consideration, as long as they were proposed by the March 18, 2023 deadline and appear on the following not-recommended list.

- Apportionment/Redistricting
- Election Laws
- Legislature
- Land Use
- Child Health/Welfare
- Education
- Family Issues/Law
- Gambling
- Transportation
- Criminal Justice

LWVUS Positions on Representative Government, 2022-2024

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive.

Voting Rights

- **Citizen's Right to Vote.** Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.
- **DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation.** Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

Election Process

- **Apportionment.** Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.
- **Redistricting.** Support redistricting processes and enforceable standards that promote fair and effective representation at all levels of government with maximum

opportunity for public participation.

- **Money in Politics (formerly Campaign Finance).** Support campaign finance/MIP regulations that enhance political equality for all citizens, ensure transparency, protect representative democracy from distortion by undisclosed contributions and big money, and combat corruption and undue influence in government. Support campaign spending that is restricted but not banned. Support public financing, full disclosure, abolishing super PACs, and creating an effective enforcement agency.
- **Selection of the President.** Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct popular vote. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.
- **Voter Representation/Electoral Systems.** Support electoral systems at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable, and enhance representation for all voters.

Citizen Rights

- **Citizen's Right to Know/Public Participation.** Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate informed understanding and public participation in government decision-making.
- **Individual Liberties.** Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.
- **Public Policy on Reproductive Choices.** Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Evaluating Constitutional Amendment Proposals and Constitutional Conventions

- **Amendment Proposals.** Consider whether a proposal addresses matters of abiding importance, makes our political system more democratic, protects individual rights, could be achieved by a constitutional amendment or legislative proposal, and is consistent with other League positions.
- **Constitutional Conventions.** Hold constitutional conventions only when certain conditions are in place, including limited to a specific topic, full transparency, delegates selected by population, and voting by delegates not by states.

Congress and The Presidency

- **Congress.** Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decisionmaking capability, effective performance, and transparency.
- **The Presidency.** Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

Privatization

- Ensure transparency, accountability, positive community impact, and preservation of the common good when considering the transfer of governmental services, assets, and/or functions to the private sector.

Digital Equity

- High-speed affordable internet access is an essential service that should be readily

available to all US residents and businesses

For LWVUS positions in detail see [Impact on Issues](#)

LWVUS Positions on Natural Resources, 2022-2024

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

Resource Management

Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Promote resource conservation, stewardship, and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government. Preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the ecosystem with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control

The League supports the preservation of the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment.

- **Air Quality.** Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.
- **Energy.** Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation, and encourage the use of renewable resources.
- **Land Use.** Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.
- **Water.** Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater, and drinking water, and set up a process to evaluate inter-basin water transfers.
- **Waste Management.** Promote policies to reduce the generation of solid and hazardous wastes and promote their reuse and recycling.
- **Nuclear.** Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

Transfer of Federal Public Lands

Promote policies that keep federal public lands under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Climate Change

Support climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best available climate science and that will ensure a stable climate system for future generations.

Public Participation

Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

Federal Agriculture Policies

Support environmentally sound farm practices, and increased reliance on the free market while promoting adequate supplies of food at reasonable prices and regulations to all animal and aquaculture production. Enforce federal antitrust laws to ensure competitive agricultural markets, provide financial support to subsidize agriculture in specific instances. Support the federal government's funding of basic agricultural research to ensure adequate safety of our food supply.

For LWVUS positions in detail, see [Impact on Issues](#)

LWVUS Positions on Social Policy, 2022-2024

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

Criminal Justice

Support 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

Equality of Opportunity

- **Equal Rights.** Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA. Support equal rights for all under state and federal law regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability.
- **Education, Employment, and Housing.** Support equal access to education, employment, and housing.

Federal Role in Public Education

Support federal policies that provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12.

Fiscal Policy

- **Tax Policy.** Support 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.
- **Federal Deficit.** Promote responsible deficit policies.
- **Funding of Entitlements.** Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance.

Health Care

Promote a health care system for the United States that provides affordable access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents, including behavioral health that is integrated with and achieves parity with the physical health care system.

Immigration

Promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas. Ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

- **Income Assistance.** Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food clothing and shelter.
- **Support Services.** Provide essential support services.
- **Housing.** Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

Child Care

Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality childcare for all who need it.

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development, and safety of all children.

Violence Prevention

Support violence prevention programs in communities.

Gun Policy

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

Urban Policy

Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

Death Penalty

LWVUS supports abolition of the death penalty.

Sentencing Policy

Support the exploration and utilization of alternatives to imprisonment, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

Human Trafficking

Oppose all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

Whatever the issue, the League 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.

For LWVUS positions in detail, see [Impact on Issues](#)

LWVPA Adopted State Positions in Brief

Representative Government

Apportionment and Redistricting

LWVPA supports apportionment and redistricting based substantially on population of all voting districts, with additional consideration given to compact and contiguous territory and with respect given to municipal boundaries.

Election Laws

LWVPA supports effective election laws that guarantee a citizen's right to vote, ensure that elections are accessible, transparent, fair, and secure, promoted universal voter participation, and provide voters with meaningful choices when they go to the polls.

Governmental Authorities

LWVPA supports measures to ensure that governmental authorities act in the public interest, that the powers of authorities are clearly defined, and that authorities are established only when the authority structure enhances the ability to provide a public service.

Initiative and Referendum

LWVPA supports adoption of popular initiative and referendum in Pennsylvania, with initiative permitted for both statutes and constitutional amendments.

Judiciary

LWVPA supports an efficient unified court system and a responsible, ethical judiciary that is free from political influence.

Legislature

LWVPA supports improvements to the structure and practices of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

Municipal Government

LWVPA supports measures that enable local governments to operate more effectively.

Natural Resources

Land Use

LWVPA supports more comprehensive statewide land use planning and adoption of a comprehensive land use policy; supports a comprehensive program for the preservation of agricultural and open space lands for Pennsylvania; promotes environmentally sound agricultural practices in Pennsylvania.

Natural Gas Extraction

LWVPA supports the maximum protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of natural gas extraction/production, site restoration, and delivery to the customer by requiring the use of best practices and promoting comprehensive regulation, communication, and adequate staffing across government agencies. We support the prevention of burdening the taxpayer with costs of industrialization and unanticipated consequences. We support the 2006 Pennsylvania Property Rights Protection Act without amendment, the adoption of minimum spacing requirements for wells, and the pooling of properties between corporate entities to maximize efficiencies and reduce risk in the extraction process. We support the maximum protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of natural gas transmission operations through improved siting, regulation, inspection, and enforcement that is transparent and responsive to stakeholder input.

Pooling

LWVPA recognizes that consolidating adjacent properties for drilling is a means to increase efficiency and minimize risk. At the same time, the League believes that individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.

Pipelines And Other Bulk Methods of Transporting Natural Gas, Hydrogen Gas, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), Liquefied And Gaseous Carbon Dioxide

LWVPA recognizes that pipelines are a relatively safe and efficient means of transporting natural gas.

Great Lakes Concurrence

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem.

Environmental Justice Concurrence

The League believes that government must conduct its programs, policies, and activities in a manner that promotes equity and affords fair treatment, accessibility, and protection for all residents, regardless of race, age, culture, income, or geographic location.

Climate Smart Agriculture and Food Action Concurrence:

The League supports actions to enable Pennsylvania's agricultural sector to adapt to climate change; mitigate and eventually negate the impacts that Pennsylvania's agriculture and food production industry have on climate change; provide assistance to alleviate food insecurity and reduce food waste throughout the State; inform and educate citizens about how their food is sourced and produced.

Social Policy

Child Health and Welfare

LWVPA supports promoting the physical, emotional, and mental health and welfare of children and youth.

Juvenile Justice

LWVPA supports legal procedures and institutional processes that are evidence-based at every step, that prioritize diversion and community-based intervention when a significant threat to persons does not exist, and that keep youth out of home no longer than the timeframe supported by research. The accountability of the juvenile justice system should be strengthened with particular attention to reducing inequities.

Collective Bargaining in The Public Sector

LWVPA supports collective bargaining in the public sector that maintains the balance between the rights and obligations of employees and employers, with the goal of providing citizens with essential public services.

Education

LWVPA supports equal access to quality public education, to be achieved by participation of government and citizens at all levels and by adequate financing based on an equitable and flexible tax system.

Family Issues and Laws

LWVPA supports gender neutral and equitable laws in marriage, divorce, property, child custody, and child support in Pennsylvania.

Fiscal Policy

LWVPA supports an equitable and flexible tax system for state and local government in Pennsylvania.

Gambling

LWVPA opposes the legalization of additional forms of gambling in Pennsylvania.

Transportation

LWVPA supports promoting energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems that afford access to housing and jobs, relieve congestion, and enhance the quality of life in communities of all sizes. LWVPA supports predictable public funding that enables fiscally stable transportation systems to provide consistent levels of service.

Criminal Justice. LWVPA believes that our justice system should be fair to all and that everyone who becomes a part of the system should be treated with dignity. The system should be effective, cost efficient, and data driven. Persons should not be deprived of constitutional rights to reasonable bail or effective counsel because they are poor, because they live in a poor community, or because it is politically or economically expedient. Barriers to successful reintegration into society, including damaging conditions in jails and prison, restrictions and requirements of re-entrants, and legal financial obligations that realistically cannot be paid, should be minimized.

LWVPA Positions on Representative Government

Apportionment and Redistricting

Position in Brief: LWVPA supports apportionment and redistricting based substantially on population of all voting districts, with additional consideration given to compact and contiguous territory and with respect given to municipal boundaries.

Background on Apportionment and Redistricting Position

In January 2016, LWVPA joined with Common Cause PA, Committee of Seventy, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, and other good government reform organizations to form Fair Districts PA, a coalition dedicated to redistricting reform. Within the span of a year, FDPA grew to include thousands of members with chapters across Pennsylvania. FDPA has worked extensively to raise public awareness of the redistricting problem and educate citizens on how to advocate for the reforms they wanted.

In June 2017, LWVPA, along with 18 plaintiffs, filed a lawsuit in Commonwealth Court seeking to have the 2011 Congressional redistricting maps invalidated and the General Assembly enjoined from using data on political affiliation in drawing future maps. While the maps for the 2018 election were fairer than the 2011 maps, the process by which the maps are drawn has not been changed, having failed to gain the support of the General Assembly. In 2016, representatives from the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, Common Cause Pennsylvania, Committee of Seventy, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, and others formed Fair Districts PA with the goal of statewide redistricting reform. Since then FDPA has grown into a statewide grassroots movement. Through education, action, and advocacy, FDPA and LWVPA played a large role in the 2020 redistricting cycle, which saw a more transparent process and more representative maps. FDPA and LWVPA continue to work for a codified independent legislative redistricting commission for the 2023 cycle.

Election Laws

Position in Brief: LWVPA supports effective election laws that guarantee a citizen's right to vote, ensure that elections are accessible, transparent, fair, and secure, promoted universal voter participation, and provide voters with meaningful choices when they go to the polls.

Position in Detail:

Registration

LWVPA supports:

- Allowing eligible citizens to both register or change their registration status and cast a ballot on the day of a primary or election;
- Allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote;

- Allowing 17-year-olds who will be 18 years old on or before the date of a General Election to register and vote for candidates in the corresponding primary;
- Automatic voter registration and universal automatic voter registration, as long as the process adequately addresses concerns over mistakenly registering non-citizens and others who are ineligible. Those who are preregistered should be able to opt-out if they so desire; and
- Enabling voters to provide information that was missing on their voter registration applications when they go to vote on Primary or Election Day and to vote on a provisional ballot.

Election Procedures

LWVPA supports:

- State administered elections with a single appointed official having authority to define responsibility and to direct the activities of county and district election officials;
- Strict enforcement of present election procedures;
- Appointment of district election officers by county boards of elections from lists submitted by political parties on the basis of bipartisan representation, qualifying tests, and mandatory training;
- Use of public buildings as polling places wherever practical;
- Wearing of identification badges by election officials;
- Requiring that all poll watchers be residents of the county in which the election district where they are assigned is located;
- Requiring that all poll watchers who challenge a voter's eligibility at the polls be required to write out their challenge and sign an affidavit with an Election Official as witness that the challenge is truthful and in good faith;
- Requiring that both poll workers and poll watchers take training authorized by the state;
- Providing registered voters with sample ballots before Election Day;
- Giving notice to voters of their appropriate polling place locations;
- Providing public and voter notification of voters' rights at the polling place;
- Extension of election hours;
- Intensified voter education in methods of splitting a ticket.

Absentee Voting

LWVPA supports:

- Simplified procedures for all qualified absent electors;
- Guarantees against fraud;
- Protection of the secrecy of the ballot, including the counting of absentee ballots at the county level;
- Measures to make voting more accessible by providing any registered voter with alternatives to casting a ballot in person on the day of a Primary or General Election;
- Simplifying the processes for casting an Emergency Absentee Ballot, including eliminating the need to have the application notarized;

- Utilizing the Internet to transmit applications for absentee ballots and blank ballots for all voters. Because of security concerns, at this time the return of voter absentee ballots should be by hand or via US mail;
- That the only absentee voting provision in the Constitution should be that it is mandatory upon the Legislature to provide for civilian absentee voting.

Prison Voting

LWVPA supports offering voter registration and absentee ballot applications to eligible jail and prison inmates and to inmates upon their release. Provisions in the Election Code that facilitate absentee ballot application and voting by residents of public institutions should be extended to residents of local, state, and federal penal institutions who are qualified to vote. All inmates should be considered residents of the election district where they lived before they were incarcerated.

Voting Systems

LWVPA supports only voting systems that are designed so that:

- They employ a voter-verifiable paper ballot or other paper record, said paper being the official record of the Voter's intent; and the voter can verify, either by eye or with the aid of suitable devices for those who have impaired vision, that the paper ballot/record accurately reflects his or her intent; and
- Such verification takes place while the voter is still in the process of voting; and
- The paper ballot/recount is used for audits and recounts; and
- The vote totals can be verified by an independent hand count of the paper ballot/record; and
- Routine audits of the paper ballot/record in randomly selected precincts can be conducted in every election, and the results published by the jurisdiction.

Election of School Directors

As an interim step toward the ultimate goal of nonpartisan election of school directors, LWVPA supports cross-filing on the ballot by candidates for school director.

Ballot Access

LWVPA believes that:

- A minor party candidate is to submit the same number of signatures on their petition as required for a major party candidate.
- When an objection is filed to the nomination of a candidate, all candidates for that office will have their petitions reviewed by the appropriate election board.

Election of the President

The League of Women Voters believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the President until the abolition of the Electoral

College is accomplished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system— from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with enough information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

Primaries

LWVPA supports abandoning the closed primary system in favor of either the semi-open or open primary. Either approach will allow electors, regardless of initial registration status, to participate in the primary of the major party of their choice. Elections for both presidential and state and local primaries should use the same system.

Electoral Systems

An electoral system is a method used for casting and counting votes to determine election winner(s).

Single-seat Elections.

In Pennsylvania, when three or more candidates seek election to a single-seat office like governor or legislator in a single-member state house or state senate district, the winners are those who receive the most votes even if they received less than 50 percent of the total vote (a plurality rather than a majority). Candidates, who do not themselves have a chance of winning, can be spoilers: votes cast for them can change who does win. This discourages electors from voting for minor party or independent candidates they prefer. First, LWVPA believes an elections system should encourage electors to vote for their true favorite (sincere voting) rather than for someone who they believe has a better chance of defeating the candidate they like least (strategic voting). Furthermore, an electoral system used in single-seat elections should guarantee that the winner would receive a majority (not just a plurality) of votes. Some states hold runoff votes at a future date. This is costly and very likely involves a different cohort of electors than in the original round of voting. LWVPA supports adopting ranked-choice voting in which voters rank their preferences, that guarantees the choice of a winner after just one round of voting.

Legislatures, Councils, and other Multiple Winner Elections.

In a legislature or council elected on a partisan basis, a fair electoral system would:

- Allow the party that receives the most votes across the whole system to win the most seats;
- Allow minority parties that receive a significant share of votes to win a corresponding share of seats; and
- Level the playing field for women and other consistently under-represented demographic groups.

Mixed Member Proportional Election System

In elections to the General Assembly, Pennsylvania uses a single-member district plurality system. Because of self-sorting and sometimes deliberate gerrymandering, district

elections are often uncompetitive and can result in lopsided representation in the House or the Senate. One party wins significantly fewer seats than the opposition, even though it received almost as many or even more votes statewide. It is also impossible for minor parties to win any seats. LWVPA supports a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system for elections to the General Assembly. In MMP, elections of most legislatures remain single member district elections, as now. A formula designed to establish proportionality between each party's statewide vote and its total number of legislators determines the number of additional seats allocated to each party.

MMP is not suitable for local elections to small multiple-seat legislative bodies. Block voting used in many jurisdictions can result in one party winning all the seats. To encourage minority party representation on local governing bodies, local Leagues might consider supporting alternatives. Among these are Single Transferable Voting (a variant of IRV), Limited Voting (now used for three-seat county and township councils), and Cumulative Voting.

Miscellaneous

LWVPA opposes any elected official simultaneously holding public and party offices.

Background on Election Laws Position

For Decades LWVPA has supported bills which are now law, including registration by mail and the use of electronic voting devices, and laws to make it easier for the disabled and the elderly to vote. Legislation to eliminate cross-filing for school directors has been opposed by the League.

After passage of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA), the League worked hard for legislation to bring Pennsylvania into compliance with the Act. In 2002, LWVPA supported legislation that established the Statewide Uniform Registry of Electors (SURE), which creates a single computerized database of registered voters.

After the Federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) was signed into law, This included requirements for county boards of elections to process provisional ballots, identification requirements for those who vote for the first time in an election district, and a system for filing complaints.

In 2011-12 LWVPA again carried out an aggressive campaign in opposition to legislation requiring all voters to present government issued photo identification at the polls in order to cast a ballot. In 2012 the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed one of the country's most restrictive voter ID laws that would require voters to have specified types of photo identification before they could vote.

Delegates to the 2015 League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania State Convention approved a review and update of current election law. The review was conducted throughout 2016-2017 and adopted at the 2017 State Convention.

After the 2020 election cycle, Pennsylvania voters faced widespread mis and disinformation attempts to subvert voting rights. In 2022, the League threw the weight of its resources behind election protection efforts and litigation. Advocacy efforts included fighting for election security, vote by mail, and election administration. The League also strongly opposed stricter voter ID laws and election subversion efforts. The League filed an amicus brief in *Ball v. Chapman*, a case concerning the rights of voters with undated mail-in ballots, as well as joining all 50 Leagues around the country in submitting an amicus brief in *Moore v. Harper*, a threat to our national democratic values and institutions.

Updated June 2023

Governmental Authorities

Position in Brief: Support measures to ensure that governmental authorities act in the public interest, that the powers of authorities are clearly defined, and that authorities are established only when the authority structure enhances the ability to provide a public service.

Position in Detail:

Use of Authorities

LWVPA believes:

- Authorities should not be formed solely for the purpose of funding projects and services.
- Authority structure is appropriate, though not necessarily preferred, to provide for continuity of service or administration, to separate the project from political pressures, and/or to enhance efficiency.
- Authority structure is preferred for regional facilities or services.

Management and Controls

In order to protect the public interest, LWVPA believes:

- The scope and responsibility of the authority should be clearly defined.
- Authority board members should be representative of the range of community interests, including the consumer, without reference to political party affiliation.
- Authority board members should be required to have periodic training.
- Authority projects should conform to municipal and/or regional comprehensive plans.
- Public hearings should be held on authority projects.
- Authorities should be required to institute a system of internal fiscal and management controls.
- A consumer advocate should be available at the state or local level.
- The Public Utilities Commission should have oversight for utility authorities.

A referendum should not be required for:

- The formation of an authority.
- Expansion of the purpose or domain of an authority.
- Bond issues of an authority.

Ethics

The League believes near relatives of board members should not benefit financially from the authority. Solicitors for authorities should be subject to a code of ethics which assures that they and their law firms:

- Avoid any conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety.
- Do not represent persons appearing before the authority.
- Do not represent the parent municipality(ies) creating the authority.

Oversight

Financial reports, long-range plans, and management and performance audits should be made available by the authority to the general public, the creating municipality(ies), the grant-making agency where applicable, and the state.

Background on Governmental Authority Position

Governmental authorities are frequently involved in providing infrastructure needs of communities, as well as other facilities and services. The LWVPA consensus position was reached in 1987 after a two-year study during which Leagues surveyed their local authorities for the functions they perform, their funding, whether they are operating or leasing authorities, and their ethical and management practices.

This position is for use primarily at the local government level. LWVPA monitors relevant state legislation and can provide information and assistance to Leagues who wish to support or oppose the formation or operation of governmental authorities in their areas.

Updated March 2023

Initiative and Referendum

Position in Brief: Support adoption of popular initiative and referendum in Pennsylvania, with initiative permitted for both statutes and constitutional amendments.

Position in Detail:

The League supports the adoption of popular initiatives for Pennsylvania. Citizens should be given the power to initiate statutes and constitutional amendments. The League prefers the indirect initiative process, whereby a proposal goes before the voters only if the legislature fails to act on it within a prescribed period.

LWVPA supports popular referendum, believing that Pennsylvanians should have the right to propose that a passed law be placed on the ballot for ratification or rejection by the voters. Application for a petition to repeal should be made within a limited time period, which should be no less than 30 days after the law in question has been enacted.

Legislation to provide for popular initiative and referendum should include certain requirements and safeguards.

The Initiative

LWVPA supports:

- Setting a time limit for legislative action before an indirect initiative is placed on the ballot.
- Limiting each proposition to one subject.
- Barring propositions that would abrogate rights guaranteed by the U.S. or Pennsylvania Constitution.
- Limiting the number of measures that can appear on a ballot.

The Petition Process

LWVPA supports:

- Mandatory identification of sponsors and sponsoring organizations on the petition.
- A required minimum number of signatures to qualify the petition.
- Imposition of a filing fee.
- Giving sponsors access to help in drafting petitions, including advice on constitutionality of the proposition.
- Mandating state-provided consultation on final wording of the petition, including review of constitutionality.
- Limiting the time allowed for collecting signatures on a petition.
- Requiring a greater number of signatures for constitutional amendments than for statutory laws.
- Mandating verification of signatures by the state.
- Requiring that petition circulators be registered to vote in Pennsylvania.
- Setting geographical representation requirements for signatures on a petition.
- Prohibiting the use of paid petition circulators; if paid circulators are permitted, all circulators should be required to identify themselves as either volunteer or paid.
- Prohibiting circulation of petitions by mail.

Financing of Initiative Campaigns

The League believes the public has a right to know the amounts and sources of money spent to support or oppose ballot measures. LWVPA supports:

- Requiring full and timely disclosure of the amounts and sources of contributions and expenditures in ballot campaigns.
- Requiring advertisements for and against propositions to include identification of funding sources.
- Setting limits on campaign spending.
- Setting limits on out-of-state contributions to campaigns

Voter Education

LWVPA believes that the state should be required to provide voter education on proposed ballot questions. Information should include:

- The identity of supporters and opponents of propositions.
- A fiscal and/or environmental impact statement, when relevant.

The state should establish a minimum time period for voter education between petition certification and placement on the ballot.

Enactment

LWVPA supports:

- A prescribed waiting period before a failed proposition can be reintroduced.
- A prescribed waiting period before a successful proposition can be challenged by a counter proposal or by legislative action.
- LWVPA opposes permitting executive veto of a popular initiative.

Voting

LWVPA believes that initiatives and referendums should be placed on the ballot in general and municipal elections only, and not permitted in primary elections; and that voter participation should be a factor in the passage of both statutory and constitutional initiatives and referendums.

Background on Initiative and Referendum Position

The position was adopted in 1991 following a two-year statewide study. LWVPA publicized the new position widely and notified the legislature of its support for initiative and referendum. LWVPA monitors and comments on relevant legislative proposals, which to date have gone nowhere in the General Assembly.

Updated May 2023

Judiciary

Position in Brief: LWVPA supports an efficient unified court system and a responsible, ethical judiciary that is free from political influence.

Position in Detail:

LWVPA supports a unified court system and a judiciary that abides by a code of ethics and is accountable to the public for disclosure of personal finances, conflicts of interest, and costs of administration.

Selection of Judges

The League supports nonpartisan merit selection of trial and appellate judges. Until such merit selection becomes a reality, all candidates for elected judicial office should be permitted to cross-file. We support retention elections for trial and appellate judges.

Unified Court System

The League supports a unified court system, which includes the minor courts and constables. The unified court system should be funded by the state; the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, supported by an adequately staffed administrative office, should be responsible for its administration.

Minor Judiciary

The League supports minor court system that provides:

- Swift handling of cases.
- An entry-level court accessible to the community.
- A court where cases can be heard informally and with minimal expense to the parties involved and the public.

Minor court administration that includes:

- Clearly defined areas of responsibility assigned to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), the president judge and the court administrator.
- Increased administrative support by the AOPC, including regular and timely procedural audits and corrective action where necessary. Financial audits should be conducted by the appropriate governmental entities and corrective action taken where necessary.
- Delineation of the disciplinary powers of the president judge over district justices.
- Mandatory instruction by the Commonwealth for court administrators.

Educational requirements for the minor judiciary that include:

- Expanded instruction before and after certification to meet the demands of the office.
- Continuing education, including regional instruction where appropriate, and successful completion of tests.
- Successful completion of the certifying examination by attorney district justices before taking office.
- Limits on civil and criminal cases that reflect current economic conditions.

Background on Judiciary Position

LWVPA has supported a merit appointment system for judges since 1949, believing that such a process will help remove judges from partisan politics.

As of the conclusion of the 2022 session the General Assembly had not passed a merit selection bill. LWVPA continues to support passage of a constitutional amendment to provide for merit selection, rather than election, of judges and is active in a large and growing coalition that favors the change. At the 2023 Convention, delegates approved a review and revision of the position on judicial selection to be conducted in the 2023-2025 biennium.

Updated June 2023

The Legislature

Position in Brief: Support improvements to the structure and practices of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

Position in Detail:

LWVPA believes Legislators should:

- Regard the office as a full-time job and a primary obligation during their time in office;
- Account for all expenses subsidized by public monies.

- Have sufficient trained staff to support legislative obligations and provide constituent services;
- Have the capability to make optimum use of current technology, particularly electronic communications technology;
- Abide by a code of ethics, compiled from current legal requirements and other ethics precepts, applicable to all legislators and staff, and easily accessible to citizens as well as legislators. Enforcement and administration of the Code of Ethics should be strengthened, with clear procedures for filing a complaint and penalties and sanctions sufficient to encourage compliance.

Enforcement and administration of the Code of Ethics should not be solely the responsibility of the Ethics Committees of the House and Senate but also involve an independent agency. Review and training on the Code of Ethics should be provided for both legislators and staff at the beginning of each legislative session. At a minimum, a code of ethics should:

- Limit the value of gifts received to a small amount (e.g., \$50), requiring all gifts to be reported;
- Require an annual statement of financial interests, including real estate and business interests;
- Forbid acceptance of honoraria;
- Prohibit conduct that would constitute a conflict of interest.
- Require legislators to abstain from voting on matters that may constitute a conflict of interest.

The legislature could be made more effective by:

- A substantial reduction in size.
- An increase in the terms of representatives to four-year staggered terms.
- The use of joint hearings.
- Access to all pertinent information on executive programs through periodic reports of departments, agencies, and commissions.
- The use of a simple majority for Senate confirmation of all gubernatorial appointees, including those appointed to the judiciary and to state regulatory positions.

As well as changes in the Rules of Procedure that would:

- Limit the number of bills each legislator could introduce.
- Set a deadline after which only bills addressing an emergency could be introduced.
- Provide for an automatic calendar.
- Set a limit of 5 legislative days for the Appropriations Committee to release bills requiring fiscal notes.
- Provide for committee membership that more closely reflects the ratio of party members in the House and Senate.
- Require committee chairs to be elected by committee members.
- Be uniform for both House and Senate.
- Require a supermajority vote (2/3) to suspend the rules.

- Establish a training program on the rules for all legislators at the beginning of each session.

To increase public trust in and improve public access to the legislative process:

- The rules requiring open committee meetings and public reports should be enforced.
- A suitable mechanism for advertising public meetings in a timely manner should be provided.

Background on Legislature Position

LWVPA's position on the legislature was originally based on the results of studies conducted in the 1970s. Because the position had been last updated in 1979, and because the operation of government is a primary concern of the League, a committee was appointed by the state board to review the position in 1995-96. A revised statement of position was written to reflect changes made since 1979 and add specifics regarding a code of ethics for legislators and recommended changes in the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure. The new Position in Detail was adopted in 1997.

Updated May 2023

Municipal Government

Position in Brief: Support measures that enable local governments to operate more effectively.

Position in Detail:

LWVPA believes further fragmentation of local governments in Pennsylvania should be discouraged.

Criteria for assigning, limiting, or sharing governmental functions and powers should be:

- Geographic area and characteristics.
- Population size and/or density.
- Economy and efficiency of performance.
- Financial resources.
- The need for a regional approach.
- Responsiveness to citizens.

Community identity and current performance should be considered. Criteria should be used selectively in evaluating functions and powers.

Under a county or area home rule charter, a local municipality may be excluded only if it meets or exceeds standards of performance set by its charter government.

Background on Municipal Government Position

The League's interest in the role of the state in local government began decades ago as members studied municipal problems in their communities. The position is primarily for use by local Leagues in monitoring and evaluating municipal government. Leagues may

work for the establishment of government study commissions, and members may serve on commissions, testify, observe, consult and educate the public on local issues.

In 2007, LWVPA offered these guidelines to a local League considering a local government change to home rule:

- Are the terms of the home rule publicly announced and have hearings been held?
 - Will minority representation be addressed?
 - Will ethics be addressed in the form of government?
 - How will the public interest be managed?
 - Will major parties be fairly represented?
 - Will the home rule charter improve the efficiency of local government in regard to tax equity, government operations, and election of government offices.
-

LWVPA Positions on Natural Resources

Land Use

Position in Brief: Support more comprehensive statewide land use planning and adoption of a comprehensive land use policy; support a comprehensive program for the preservation of agricultural and open space lands for Pennsylvania; promote environmentally sound agricultural practices in Pennsylvania.

Position in Detail:

A comprehensive statewide land use plan:

- Should contain overall state guidelines and minimum standards set by the state for various levels of governmental action.
- Must contain critical area guidelines, which are consistent with the nature, size, and criticality of the area.
- Should have planning for critical areas exercised by a level of government higher than the local level, with local input, and consistent with state guidelines.
- Should allow the state to exercise veto power over critical area decisions if they are inconsistent with state guidelines.
- Should require coordination with other statewide plans in Pennsylvania.
- Should coordinate plans and policies of regional agencies.
- Should recommend that local governments exercise at least a minimum level of planning and control over land use.
- Should require impact statements on major public and private investments.
- Must provide for continuing citizen education and citizen participation at every stage of the planning process.
- Must provide for local input and initiative.

- Must stress enforcement.

The League supports the establishment of a statewide land use board or commission, which would have advisory and regulatory authority to implement a land use policy plan. This board or commission should be:

- Representative of all interests and of all geographic areas.
- Accountable and nonpartisan in nature.
- Composed of members free from conflicts of interest.
- Composed of an existing body or selected from an existing body in order to avoid increasing bureaucratic levels.

Local Decision:

Local governments should exercise control over land use decisions that are of purely local concern. Land use decisions for uncontrolled areas where local governments fail to regulate should be made at the county level, subject to compliance with state guidelines.

Appeals Board:

When a conflict exists in deciding whether local, county, or state plans should take precedence under a statewide program, an appeals board with power to arbitrate conflicts among governmental bodies, and among citizens and governmental bodies, should be established. This board should:

- Be composed of nonpartisan citizen representatives with no vested interests.
- Set time limits on the appeals process.

State Aid:

In administering all state aid, duplication of efforts should be avoided, coordination should take place, and the aid should be used for intended purposes. In order that state government can help local governments develop and exercise local land use management functions, the League supports:

- Increased state financial aid for research.
- Increased state technical assistance.
- Increased state data information.

Agricultural and Open Space Lands:

The League supports a comprehensive program for the preservation of agricultural and open space lands for Pennsylvania, and promotion of environmentally sound agricultural practices. Such a program should:

- Be flexibly designed to address the variety of needs that exist throughout the Commonwealth.
- Include differential assessment and agricultural districts.
- Include a reappraisal of the tax structure.
- Include investigation, by the state, of the concept of development rights.
- Strengthen programs for the acquisition of open space lands.

The League supports differential assessment for actively farmed agricultural lands and open space as one means of preserving these areas in the Commonwealth.

A differential assessment program should contain:

- Minimum income and acreage requirements for eligibility.
- Eligibility requirements for open space lands, which are flexible enough to include critical environmental areas and to encourage the preservation of smaller pieces of open space, especially in densely populated areas.
- Provisions that restore a portion of deferred taxes to a community when land changes use and include a disincentive for change in land use.

Background on Land Use Position

A two-part study of state land use issues resulted in consensus on comprehensive state land use policy and planning (1976) and the effect of taxation on agricultural and open space lands (1977). The position was updated in 1983 and 1991 to include language promoting agricultural production in Pennsylvania and indicating the importance of environmentally sound agricultural practices.

Since the late 1990s, the League has opposed state “takings” legislation that would require compensation to owners of property whose value is decreased by any action, regulation or decision of local or state government. Such a law would effectively inhibit any efforts at comprehensive land use planning. Historically, the League has supported land use legislation that gives the tools to local governments to preserve agricultural land, open space and historic heritage, as well as to revitalize declining communities that wish to attract growth and development. League members can play an important role in encouraging their communities to take advantage of these tools.

Updated May 2023

Natural Gas Extraction

Position in Brief: Support the maximum protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of natural gas extraction and production, site restoration, and delivery to the customer by requiring the use of best practices and promoting comprehensive regulation, communication, and adequate staffing across government agencies.

Support the prevention of burdening the taxpayer with costs of industrialization and unanticipated consequences.

Support the 2006 Pennsylvania Property Rights Protection Act without amendment, the adoption of minimum spacing requirements for wells, and the pooling of properties between corporate entities to maximize efficiencies and reduce risk in the extraction process.

Support the maximum protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of natural gas transmission operations through improved siting, regulation, inspection, and enforcement that is transparent and responsive to stakeholder input.

Position in Detail:

LWVPA recognizes that natural gas extracted by fracking is a finite, carbon-based, energy

resource and that its production significantly affects the environment and the economy of the Commonwealth. Under Natural Resources positions adopted by LWVUS, we believe government policies should promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest. Under the Fiscal Policy position adopted by LWVPA, we support an equitable and flexible revenue system for funding state and local government services. Finally, in concert with the Pennsylvania Constitution, Article 1, Section 27, we believe:

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people."

The League supports:

- The protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of natural gas production, site restoration, and delivery to the customer, by requiring the use of best practices, and promoting comprehensive regulation, communication, and adequate staffing across government agencies.
- The complete and proper decommissioning of wells.
- The capping of abandoned mines and reclamation of well lands.
- Encouragement of employment opportunities at the local level and economic development related to natural gas extraction that will result in new streams of revenue for state and local government agencies—but not at the expense of tourism related to natural recreation areas.
- A sufficient fee structure on natural gas extraction for permits, bonds, and surcharges for the funds to plug abandoned and orphan oil and gas wells that reflects projected costs, to prevent a burden on Pennsylvania taxpayers.
- Creation of a severance tax on natural gas as a revenue source primarily designated for:
 - the monitoring and protection of public health;
 - the preservation and enhancement of natural resources;
 - an escrow fund for supporting community adjustment as the industry grows and declines; and
 - research on the effects of natural gas extraction from fracking on the economy, environment, and public health of Pennsylvanians.
- Legislation and regulation that provides for:
 - transparency in all stages of exploration, drilling, and production;
 - ensuring public input into decision-making regarding the location of facilities and related pipelines;
 - extending the timelines and parameters for testing water supplies;
 - balancing the rights of mineral and surface owners; and
 - establishing an efficient and effective oversight system for reporting potential violations and accidents.

Adopted May 1, 2010

Updated June 2023

Background on Natural Gas Extraction Position

A state-wide study of Marcellus Shale natural gas extraction, including its ramifications for Pennsylvania's water, air, infrastructure, agriculture, forests, tourism and economy, was adopted by the 2009 LWVPA Convention. Spearheaded by the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, the usual two-year study process was fast-tracked, and a position statement adopted by the LWVPA Board on May 1, 2010. Working with coalition partners, the League served on the Citizen's Marcellus Shale Commission in 2011. Based on hearings and testimony throughout the Commonwealth, a report was published along with recommendations for improved regulations.

The League started an educational project in 2011 called, "*The Straight Scoop on Shale Drilling*". Its purpose is to educate and engage the public regarding natural gas extraction from Marcellus Shale. As part of this commitment, *The Straight Scoop on Shale Drilling* organizes a yearly conference "Shale & Public Health" featuring a large variety of experts speaking to topics related to shale drilling. To further educate the public about environmental topics, *The Straight Scoop on*

Shale Drilling supports other organizations by promoting their events. At the 2023 Convention, the position was updated to increase its scope.

Updated June 2023

Pooling

Position in Brief:

Amassing Property for the Extraction of Natural Gas from the Marcellus Shale: LWVPA recognizes that consolidating adjacent properties for drilling is a means to increase efficiency and minimize risk. At the same time, the League believes that individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.

Therefore, LWVPA supports:

- The 2006 Pennsylvania Property Rights Protection Act (PRPA)* without amendment for the development of natural gas resources so as to restrict the use of eminent domain and safeguard citizens' rights;
- Minimum spacing requirements, based on technological limits, between unconventional drilling sites to limit the number of wells; and
- Pooling of lands between corporate entities holding lands for the extraction of natural gas as a reasonable means to reduce environmental impacts without impacting individual property rights.

Pooling of lands held by individuals rather than corporate property owners is problematic. Used as a means to implement best practices for environmental management, policymakers should adopt specific criteria and clear qualifications as to how this goal will be accomplished. Any specific action should include, but not be limited to, safeguards to protect the rights of individual property owners, input from county conservations districts

and other local stakeholders in the environmental decision-making process and precise data defining compliance with previous agreed to criteria and qualifications.

Adopted June, 2011

Background on Position on Pooling

The position was adopted in June, 2011 in response to an LWV Indiana County study. The position has been used in conjunction with the League's work on natural gas extraction of Marcellus Shale. At the 2023 Convention, a review and revision was approved to clarify the position's scope and purpose.

Updated June 2023

Pipelines and Other Bulk Methods of Transporting Natural Gas, Hydrogen Gas, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), Liquefied And Gaseous Carbon Dioxide

Position in Detail:

LWVPA recognizes that pipelines are a relatively safe and efficient means of transporting natural gas. We support:

- Siting of natural gas and hydrogen pipelines through coordinated federal, state, regional, and local efforts that are objective and responsive to safety considerations, accurate environmental assessments, county conservation districts, land use planning agencies, and local communities. The process should include adequate public notice of local stakeholders from the beginning of the process, convenient input venues, timelines reflective of the PA Municipal Planning Code, consistency with existing state and local regulation, and a mediation process to resolve conflict.
- Regulation for the safe bulk transport of the titled products via pipeline, truck, or rail that encompasses the entire transmission system, including gathering lines, with standard location data, current, comprehensive maps that are publicly accessible, on-going inspection, One Call coverage, odorization, emergency/hazard response contingencies, adequately funded maintenance plans, a reserve trust to compensate for unanticipated events, and mandated best practices to promote the integrity of the system.
- Standardized and comprehensive inspection of all-natural gas and hydrogen pipelines by an adequate number of qualified inspectors who are continually updated in their training and employ best practices including on-site evaluations, objective information to verify self-reporting, accurate data gathered from sophisticated technological devices, and the support of local agencies such as emergency response teams and county conservation districts.
- Enforcement of regulations for all natural gas and hydrogen pipelines that demonstrate standardization, best practices, costly penalties that encourage compliance, and fines consistent with the nature of the violation.
- Legislation at the State level that would
 - Authorize the PA Public Utility Commission (PUC) to regulate all natural gas and hydrogen pipelines for safety without providing the right of eminent domain for gathering lines, and

- Promote the development of a regional interstate compact for siting interstate pipelines.
- Ordinances/zoning regulations, where and when possible, for natural gas and hydrogen pipelines at the local level sited and designed to protect the public, prevent environmental degradation, and reflect community or county-wide land-use planning.
- Measures to insulate regulatory agencies from political influences and other considerations provided by the natural gas companies that they are authorized to regulate. This would prevent the appearance of a conflict of interest and potential ethical concerns.

Adopted June 2011

Updated June 2023

Great Lakes Concurrence

Position in Brief: Recognizing the importance of preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem, and the need to support the attainment and maintenance of high water quality standards throughout the Great Lakes Basin, with emphasis on water pollution and water conservation; and there being no LWVUS positions covering these issues, the LWVPA Board proposed that the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania adopt by concurrence the Great Lakes Ecosystem Position adopted by the state of Michigan LWV in 2005 which addresses the aforementioned issues.

Position in Detail:

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem. We support the attainment and maintenance of high water quality standards throughout the Great Lakes Basin, with emphasis on water pollution prevention. Water conservation should be a high priority of all governments in the Basin.

- **Protective Measures.** To achieve protection and improvement of this valuable, international resource, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports efforts to:
 - Limit uses of "fragile," historical, cultural and scenic shoreline areas.
 - Preserve wild and pristine areas within the watershed, with no new development in these special habitats without adherence to strict criteria as prescribed by federal, state, or local governments.
 - Provide for appropriate recreational opportunities in and public access to sensitive areas without destruction or harm to the ecosystem.
 - Protect the quality of the air and waters of the ecosystem by strict adherence to agricultural, industrial, residential, environmental, and commercial zoning regulations that prohibit the introduction of toxic or polluting discharges or detrimental land use techniques within the Basin.
 - Protect the remaining dune formations. Enforce strict regulation of sand dune mining or development on the dunes.

- Strengthen upstream land management to eliminate sources of siltation and pollution.
 - Control the invasion and spread of non-native aquatic and terrestrial nuisance species
- Threats to the Ecosystem. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania opposes the following activities as they can lead to the degradation of the special natural resources of the Great Lakes Ecosystem:
 - Inefficient or excessive water uses. Proposals for new or increased withdrawals within the Basin, e.g., for agricultural or municipal uses, should be carefully evaluated before being permitted. Withdrawals should be regularly monitored for potential or actual damage to the ecosystem
 - Destruction of marshes and other wetlands throughout the watershed. Mitigation should be accepted only as a last resort. Mitigation proposals should be rigorously evaluated, and projects should be strictly monitored to assure no net loss to the ecosystem.
 - New or increased diversions or transfers by any means of Great Lakes waters and adjacent groundwaters to a place outside the Basin. Projects already in place should be carefully monitored and restricted if there is evidence of damage to the ecosystem.
 - Dredging and filling of river inlets, harbors, lakes or wetlands except for tightly-controlled, non-degrading and non-repetitive activities.
 - Discharge to air or water of toxic pollutants and other material from industrial, agricultural, residential or commercial operations that may damage the ecosystem in violation of laws and ordinances.
- Public Participation. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports informed and responsible action on behalf of the preservation of the Great Lakes Ecosystem. Relevant information should be readily available to the public. Opportunities for public input should be timely, accessible, convenient and well-advertised.
- Role of Government. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports:
 - Coordination of functions among various governmental agencies charged with protecting the Great Lakes and elimination of unnecessary overlap
 - Use of area-wide coordinated management plans and techniques in the solving of Great Lakes ecosystem problems.
 - Participation by all affected governments in the Basin in review and decision-making on Great Lakes agreements and projects, facilitated in open meetings and hearings.
 - Strengthening of existing mechanisms for intergovernmental discussions and decision-making.
 - Separation of responsibility for submitting recommendations for governmental projects from issuing permits for such projects.

- Monitoring and enforcement of treaties, ordinances, laws and master plans.
- Research Priorities. The League of Women Voters believes that research on Great Lakes issues should focus on:
 - Effective, non-toxic control and removal of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species.
 - Restoration of health to the overall resource.
 - Survival of native aquatic and terrestrial species and their nutrient sources.
 - Continual testing of Great Lakes water quality for impact from the following: pesticides and fertilizers, resistant bacteria, persistent pharmaceuticals and other chemicals.
 - Evaluation of water accountability systems, groundwater monitoring and water use planning and conservation efforts throughout the Basin.

Adopted June 9, 2013

Environmental Justice Concurrence

Position in Brief: The League believes that government must conduct its programs, policies, and activities in a manner that promotes equity and affords fair treatment, accessibility, and protection for all residents, regardless of race, age, culture, income, or geographic location.

Climate Smart Agriculture and Food Action Concurrence:

Position in Brief: The League supports actions to enable Pennsylvania's agricultural sector to adapt to climate change; mitigate and eventually negate the impacts that Pennsylvania's agriculture and food production industry have on climate change; provide assistance to alleviate food insecurity and reduce food waste throughout the State; inform and educate citizens about how their food is sourced and produced.

Position in Detail: Local Leagues and ILOs are urged to engage at their local and regional levels. Our actions are to:

- Promote climate-smart agricultural practices that include creating healthy soils and ecosystems; improving biodiversity; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; reducing water use, and do not degrade air, soil and water quality.
- Support financial incentives, technical assistance and regulations to promote and implement climate smart agricultural practices; research in this emerging field; and technology development.
- Promote the use of agricultural easements and other land use planning tools to save agriculture land from development and keep it part of Pennsylvania's nature-based climate solutions land inventory.
- Promote and support policies and actions that reduce both food loss and waste and recover it for distribution or repurpose.
- Promote education and transparency about agricultural practices, including the social and environmental costs and impacts of producing agricultural goods.
- Promote policies that provide healthy, affordable food to underserved areas where "food deserts" exist.

- Promote education about the climate benefits of eating a healthy plant-forward diet.

LWVPA Positions on Social Policy

Child Health and Welfare

Position in Brief: Promote the physical, emotional, and mental health and welfare of children and youth.

Adopted June 2007

Updated June 2023

Background on Position on Child Health and Welfare

The original position on juvenile justice was adopted in 1979 and expanded in 1985 to include provisions relating to children and youth and child welfare. The 2007 Convention voted to split Child Health and Welfare and Juvenile Justice into two separate positions since they deal with different issues regarding children.

LWVPA and local Leagues addressed issues concerned with child health care under two LWVUS positions: Health Care Policy and the “access to health care” portion of Meeting Basic Human Needs found in Impact on Issues. At the 2023 Convention, the position was updated to include language regarding physical and emotional health.

Updated June 2023

Juvenile Justice

Position in Brief: LWVPA supports legal procedures, and institutional processes that are evidence-based at every step, that prioritize diversion and community-based intervention when a significant threat to persons does not exist, and that keep youth out of home no longer than the timeframe supported by research. The accountability of the juvenile justice system should be strengthened with particular attention to reducing inequities.

Position in Detail:

- Research has found that two-thirds of adjudicated youth in residential placement enter the juvenile justice system for misdemeanors or failure to pay fines. Services for youth in their homes are generally more effective and far less costly than residential placement which can be as much as \$190,000 per youth per year. The system also demonstrates large racial disparities, with removal from home and prosecution as adults much more likely for Black Non-Hispanic youth, especially boys.
- The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania believes that youth with low-level cases should be diverted to community-based interventions rather than enter into formal delinquency proceedings. To support this, alternative services should be expanded and adequately funded. Written allegations against youth based on failure to pay Magisterial District Court fines should be prohibited.

- Residential placement should be limited to youth who pose a threat to themselves, others or the community. Placement should ensure evidence-based treatment, with the length of such placements consistent with timeframes established by research.
- Accountability and oversight should ensure that every child or youth placed in the custody of the Commonwealth is safe, treated equitably, and receives a quality education.
- To support a successful transition to adulthood, records of involvement in the juvenile justice system should be expunged for youth who have met their legal requirements.
- System oversight should include enhanced data collection and wider representation of oversight bodies to monitor and address system inequities.
- Personnel dealing with juveniles should have training in DEI, human relations and child development. Interdisciplinary training should be encouraged to increase effective collaboration and cooperation among programs and facilities.

Updated October 2009

Updated June 2023

Collective Bargaining in The Public Sector

Position in Brief: Support collective bargaining in the public sector that maintains the balance between the rights and obligations of employees and employers, with the goal of providing citizens with essential public services.

Position in Detail:

Right of Public Employees to Bargain Collectively

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania believes that public employees should have the right to organize and to bargain collectively with employers, and supervisory personnel should have the opportunity to “meet and discuss” issues with employers.

Strikes by Public Employees

Public sector bargaining laws must, however, reflect the essential nature of certain public services. To suspend these services even temporarily is to compromise public health and safety. To protect the public, employees such as police, firefighters, and guards at prisons and mental hospitals should be prohibited from striking. At the same time, when employees are prohibited from striking, binding arbitration must be required to resolve impasses and to bring bargaining to a meaningful conclusion. When public employees have the right to strike, the courts must be empowered to enjoin those strikes that threaten the public’s health, safety, and public welfare.

Negotiation Process

Employers, employees, and the public have a stake in avoiding strikes. The negotiation process must be one that provides every possible opportunity to reach an agreement and to avoid impasses. The League believes:

- The bargaining period should be shorter than the current nearly six- month period.
- Mediation should be mandatory when negotiators cannot reach an agreement after a reasonable period of time.
- Fact-finding can be an important tool for resolving conflicts and should be used whenever there is a possibility that an impasse can be avoided.
- Either party or the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board (PLRB) should be able to initiate fact-finding.
- If both parties agree, they should be able to submit their unresolved disputes to binding arbitration (when strikes are permitted).
- Arbitrators should adhere to standards and guidelines and be required to submit a written rationale for their decisions.
- Union security measures such as maintenance of membership and membership dues deductions are valid topics for bargaining, but a union shop is not an appropriate topic for public sector bargaining.

Injunctions

If injunctions are to be an effective means of protecting the public, penalties are an essential enforcement measure; employers should not be required to discuss amelioration of penalties. Once a strike has been enjoined, it is important to continue negotiations to maintain an even balance between the two parties, and to resolve areas of disagreement as quickly as possible. Steps to achieve this could include binding arbitration.

School Negotiations

School district negotiations are unique. The School Code sets a standard for the minimum number of days in a school year, and make-up days are an important factor in school negotiations. The courts and the legislature must consider both what constitutes a threat to a thorough and efficient education and when students' welfare has been endangered.

The League believes that every effort should be made to curtail long strikes and frequent interruptions of the educational process. Any changes designed to shorten strikes and to create greater incentives to reach a contract agreement should balance employees' rights in the collective bargaining process with students' right to a thorough and efficient education.

The Public Role

The League supports the tradition of private bargaining sessions between employer and employee. The League believes, however, that both sides must make their positions public and that citizens should have the opportunity to comment publicly, particularly before a strike occurs or an impasse is reached. Just as the legislative process should not be immune to public scrutiny, neither should agreements between public employers and employees be reached without public understanding of the issues involved.

Background on Collective Bargaining Position

Since the late 1980s, LWVPA has used the position on collective bargaining in support of bills designed to achieve prompt settlement of school strikes and to reduce their number in Pennsylvania. LWVPA continues to monitor legislative proposals dealing with school strike

negotiations. Although Act 88 of 1992 has greatly reduced the number of strikes, some questions remain as to whether additional measures may be needed to force closure of negotiations.

Education

Position in Brief: Support equal access to quality public education, to be achieved by participation of government and citizens at all levels and by adequate financing based on an equitable and flexible tax system.

Position in Detail:

The League supports:

- The establishment of basic goals of education, minimum standards, and criteria for curriculum and teacher evaluation by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- A realistic minimum level of expenditures for all districts, set by the state. Uniform expenditures across the state should not be required, and local districts should maintain control of spending by determining local priorities with citizen input.
- A combination of state and local funds to finance the public elementary and secondary schools of the Commonwealth, with the Commonwealth's share being the greater.
- Allocation of state funds based on a specific dollar amount per pupil. Additional funding should be provided based on an evaluation of special conditions in a district, including density, adequacy of the tax base, and the number of students eligible for specific programs.
- Allocation of state funds for special education based on the actual number of students with mental or physical disabilities, the nature of the disability, and the costs of appropriate instructional programs and support services.

The League opposes tuition vouchers and tuition tax credits for students in nonpublic schools.

Setting Goals

The local school board should be responsible for setting local educational goals, in addition to the minimum goals set by the PA State Board of Education and administered by the PA Department of Education. Administrators, teachers, students, and citizens should have a meaningful role in helping the local school board set local goals.

The administration of the local school district should:

- Be responsible for implementing the curriculum standards set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- Be responsible for adding additional courses to the basic curriculum, with the final decision up to the local board.
- Encourage student, teacher, and citizen participation in the curriculum- making process.

Innovative Programs

The Pennsylvania Department of Education should exercise leadership in generating interest

and providing funds to encourage experimenting with alternative schools, innovative programs, and community use of school facilities. Innovative programs should be continually evaluated for their effectiveness.

Charter Schools

Because of the impact of charter schools on the districts from which they draw their students, LWVPA believes that Pennsylvania law should provide:

- Accountability measures for program and achievement that hold charter schools, including cyber-charter schools, to the same standards applied to district schools.
- Clearly defined Charter Appeals Board criteria and a written rationale for upholding or overturning a school district decision.
- Greater financial support from the state for districts that are funding charter schools, including full state funding of cyber-charter schools.

Based on the LWVUS privatization position:

- School districts should not be privatized in their entirety.
- Authorization of charter schools should be made after an informed, transparent planning process and thorough analysis of the implications of privatizing service delivery.
 - There should be on-going and timely communication with parents, teachers, students, and the public.
 - There should be clear statement of the circumstances as they exist and what is to be gained by opening a charter school.
 - There should be definition of the quality, level and cost of charter school(s) expected.
 - Consideration of authorization of charter schools should include cost-benefit analyses evaluating short- and long-term costs of privatization, including the ongoing costs of contract administration and oversight.
 - Authorization of charter schools should consider an understanding of the impact on students and parents, the broader community, environment, and public employees.
 - There should be an open process with clearly defined criteria to be used in authorizing a charter school.
 - There should be a provision and process to ensure the assets will be returned to the school district if the charter school fails to perform.
 - Selection of charter school applications should reflect a data- driven selection of entities whose goals, purposes, and means are not incompatible with the public well-being.
 - The charter contract should reflect careful negotiation and drafting.
 - There should be adequate oversight and periodic performance monitoring of the charter school by the School Board to ensure that it is complying with all relevant laws and regulations, contract terms and conditions, and ethical standards, including public disclosure and comment.
- Legislation governing the privatization of public education and creation of charter schools should include the following requirements:

- An open process that allows for citizen input and oversight in a timely manner
- A reasonable feasibility study and evaluation
- The establishment of carefully crafted criteria for selection of the charter school
- The retention of liability and responsibility with the school board and the PA Department of Education
- Allowance for and promotion of opportunities for innovation and collaboration, and
- Provision for employment, benefits, and training plans on behalf of employees displaced as a result of authorizing a charter school.

Assessment and High-Stakes Testing

Within our schools, assessment of student learning should include measures other than standardized tests. Such assessments provide a useful tool for

- Monitoring academic progress
- Helping teachers modify instruction
- Identifying students who need additional support, and
- Informing placement decisions.

Standardized tests should be developed in a transparent manner with a clearly designated purpose and should be normed on populations similar to the ones to be tested. They should be aligned with state-adopted academic standards. Such assessments and their consequences should be modified based on needs of students with disabilities and those who are English- language learners. Standardized tests may be useful in:

- Comparing student performance across schools, districts, and states
- Measuring overall academic progress and achievement within and across groups
- Monitoring student academic growth, and
- Promoting consistent content in subject areas.

However, standardized assessments should not be used for high-stakes determinations such as grade promotion or graduation requirements. They should not be used as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of teachers or administration.

Funding should not be related only to standardized test performance. All schools should have adequate funding to enable their students to be successful.

The League believes that high-stakes testing negatively impacts student well-being, curricular programs, district budgets, and instructional time.

These negative effects may include aspects such as student and teacher stress, a narrowing of curriculum to spend more time on tested subjects, lack of availability of student electives because of focus on tested subjects, demands on district budgets for testing and remediation, and loss of instructional time to test preparation and administration.

Information obtained through testing should be made available to students, parents, and schools of attendance. Without student and/or parent permission, individual student data should not be available to colleges, employers, and the general public.

The League believes that legislation and policy regarding education assessments need to be carefully formulated to reduce potential litigation in areas such as special education, parental rights, and privacy concerns.

Supervision and Evaluation of Educational Professionals.

The goal of supervision and evaluation systems should be to increase the effectiveness of education personnel, including district superintendents and assistant superintendents and all individuals identified as “professional employees” by the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

A local school district should be responsible for establishing a system to supervise and evaluate all professionals that it employs. The system should be consistent with law and regulation.

Updated June 2015

Background on Education Position

The original position was adopted in 1975, recognizing the interrelationship of LWVPA positions on education, equality of opportunity, and taxation. Since that time, language on school funding has reflected current positions on taxation and fiscal policy. The position was updated after a 1985-1986 review of teacher and other professional evaluations, preparation, certification, and tenure.

In 2003, the position was further updated, emphasizing the need for both adequate state funding and a system that distributes these funds in a manner that diminishes the dependence of school districts on the resources of local taxpayers, thereby decreasing the unacceptable disparities in resources between rich and poor districts. As part of the 2003 update, the position was expanded to address implementation of the 1997 Charter School Law and the problems inherent in the system of state funding of local special education costs.

In 2015, the League added positions about high-stakes testing based on a study done by 9 local Leagues and adopted by concurrence at the 2015 state convention. The position was heavily used in regards to a fair school funding lawsuit which the League supported. The lawsuit was decided in favor of a more equitable funding system in early 2023.

Family Issues and Laws

Position in Brief: Support gender neutral and equitable laws in marriage, divorce, property, child custody, and child support in Pennsylvania.

Position in Detail:

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports gender neutral laws which regard marriage as an equal partnership of serious commitment and responsibility for mutual support and concern, where the contribution of each spouse is considered equal, whether the

contribution is monetary or services to the marriage and family such as homemaking and child care.

The League of Women Voters supports divorce laws which provide grounds for the legal dissolution of marriage that reasonably reflect the realities of marriage in our society—for mutual consent where both parties agree, for unilateral divorce where one party requests the divorce after a reasonable separation period of at least one year but no more than three years, and for fault grounds where appropriate.

The League of Women Voters supports:

- A counseling provision;
- Equitable distribution of property, taking into consideration all relevant factors; alimony pendente lite (pending litigation), and alimony for an economically dependent spouse as determined by taking into consideration all relevant factors. Marital misconduct will not be a consideration in economic provisions.
- The League of Women Voters supports child custody based on the best interests of the child, which shall be determined by considering all relevant factors; and specific criteria to be used in establishing support for children.
- The League of Women Voters supports recognition in law of legal separation and annulment.

Background on Family Issues and Laws Position

Consensus on divorce reform and child custody and support was reached in January 1980. With strong support from local Leagues, comprehensive divorce reform was a major legislative victory that year. Delegates to the 1991 LWVPA Convention, noting language in the position that stressed gender-neutral laws, voted to change the title from Women's Issues and Family Laws to Family Issues and Laws.

Fiscal Policy

Position in Brief: Support an equitable and flexible tax system for state and local government in Pennsylvania.

Position in Detail:

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports adequate, flexible funding of state and local governmental programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that incorporates a broad-based income tax, responsible fiscal policies, and an open budget process with adequate citizen participation.

Standards

The following standards should be used to ensure an equitable and flexible system for Pennsylvania:

Equity

- Revenue sources should be related to the ability to pay.
- Consideration should be given to those who bear the final burden of the tax.

Adequacy

- Adequate, reliable revenues should be provided to finance mandated public services without harmful effects on individuals and businesses.

Flexibility

- Control of state tax sources and rates should be in the legislature; the general framework for local revenues should be established by statute and not constitutionally mandated.
- A variety of revenue sources should be used so as to assure adequate revenues when economic conditions change.
- Tax incentives, exemptions, and other concessions to encourage or discourage economic, environmental, and social activities should be used with restraint and should be subject to mandatory periodic review.
- Dedication of specific taxes for specific purposes should be limited.
- Dedication of specific taxes should not be constitutionally mandated.

Ease of Administration

- Taxes should be understandable, certain, visible to the payers, and easy and economical to assess and collect.
- Compliance by the taxpayer should be simple and convenient.

Specific Recommendations:

Income Tax: The primary source of revenue for state and local governments should be a broad-based, progressive income tax shared by and levied on business and individual taxpayers. An exemption should be provided for low-income individuals.

Property Tax:

- Property tax exemptions for religious, charitable, or other public property (as defined in Article VIII Section 2a of the PA Constitution) should apply only to those portions actually used for public purposes. Tax exempt properties should pay for services rendered directly to them.
- Property taxes should be levied on both land and improvements; taxing jurisdictions should have the option of levying a higher tax on land than on buildings, primarily in high-density urban areas. A graded tax should be used in other areas only when there is adequate protection of farmland and open space.
- Taxing jurisdictions should have the option of using an income tax in conjunction with a classified property tax (different classes of property taxed at different rates) to lessen reliance on the unclassified property tax.
- Property Tax Relief Programs:
 - Tax abatement for the elderly, the disabled or infirm and the poor should be based upon strictly enforced standards of real financial need; benefit levels should be adjusted periodically to reflect changes in the cost of living.

- Tax abatement for improvement of deteriorating property or industrial development should be based upon stringent standards of qualification and performance.
- The League supports a preferential property tax program to preserve actively farmed lands and open space. Such a program should include income and acreage requirements and be flexible enough to include critical environmental areas and preservation of small pieces of open space in densely populated areas.

Real Estate Assessment:

- Continued use of the property tax must be predicated on uniform, accurate assessment.
- Assessment should be performed at the county level by trained, qualified assessors.
- Factors, and their definitions, to be considered in the valuation of real estate should be included in statutes.
- Ratios of assessed to market value should be uniform statewide, preferably at a level of at least 50 percent.
- Property should be reassessed at regular intervals.

Other Local Taxes

- Taxes should not be levied on occupation or per capita.
- A selection of local taxes should be available to local governmental units.
- A progressive, broad-based income tax should be substituted for the local earned income tax.
- Regional tax base sharing should be encouraged

Local Tax Collection

- Local taxes should be collected by a single centralized agency, preferably the county, by qualified, salaried, appointed personnel.
- Local income tax can be collected with the state income tax and rebated to local taxing jurisdictions on a timely basis.

Budget Process and Fiscal Policies. The budget process at state and local governmental levels should be open to the public and should include adequate citizen participation. Officials should make a special effort to develop readily understandable procedures for public involvement and to ensure that the public has adequate information to participate effectively. Public records should be readily accessible.

Adequate funding is needed to ensure opportunities for public education and effective public participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.

The LWVPA supports performance budgeting. Moneys should be appropriated with specific goals in view. Voter referenda to incur debt (as permitted by Article VIII, Section 7, PA Constitution) should occur only after legislation setting forth the standards for distributing the authorized moneys has been passed.

Amended June 2013

Background on Fiscal Policy Position

The position was reviewed and updated in 1988-89 and used at that time and again in 1998 to support passage of a constitutional amendment to permit different property tax rates for residential and commercial real estate. The first legislation to follow passage of the amendment, passed in 1998, was limited to school districts, giving them taxing options to lessen reliance on residential real estate taxes. So far, no legislation has passed that would provide new taxing options for counties or municipalities. However, in 2007 legislation was enacted to provide new taxing options for school districts (see Education position).

Gambling

Position in Brief: Oppose the legalization of additional forms of gambling in Pennsylvania.

Position in Detail:

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania continues to oppose the legalization of additional forms of gambling in the Commonwealth, except that the League takes no position on the legalization of small games of chance when used solely for the purpose of private nonprofit fundraising. The League finds no merit in arguments that extending opportunities for legal gambling is an acceptable method for increasing state and local government revenue, stimulating economic development, preventing gambling dollars from leaving the state, or reducing illegal gambling.

Should any bills to legalize additional forms of gambling be proposed, the League will work to ensure that they contain environmental, economic, and social safeguards to protect the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Location

The decision to permit the establishment of gambling operations in a particular locality should be made in cooperation with the affected local municipal government and neighborhoods. Limits should be placed on the size of video game, slot machine, and casino gambling operations and on the number of such operations within a given area. Where a regularly operated gambling enterprise likely to attract large numbers of people is proposed, licensing should be contingent upon the existence of adequate municipal services and infrastructure. A report should be required assessing the impact the gambling enterprise will have on the physical and social environment of prospective casino sites. Provisions should be made to mitigate the effects of land speculation and social and economic and residential dislocations that could result from the location of gambling enterprises.

With the exception of nonprofit bingo and small games of chance, gambling operations should not be located near schools, churches, or residential areas.

Regulation

All gambling, including nonprofit games, should be regulated at the state level with local government consideration regarding location and the setting of stricter rules. Gambling regulations should include prohibitions on access by minors, limits on credit and hours of

operation, mandatory maximum take-out rates, and controls on advertising content. To prevent intrusion by criminal elements, regulations should also include, when appropriate: licensing of employees, licensing of ancillary industries, and prohibitions on access by persons with known ties to criminal elements.

Taxation

The League opposes earmarking gambling revenue from state gambling operations, or from gambling taxes, for specific programs. Net revenues from gambling taxes should be deposited in the General Fund. The revenues should be shared with the local governments of communities impacted by the gambling activity. The state should not specify how local governments spend their share of state gambling revenues or locally generated gambling revenues.

Gambling for Nonprofit Fundraising

Gambling operations for nonprofit fundraising should be limited to bingo and small games of chance and should not be extended to slot machines and video games. The conduct and location of charity gambling should be strictly regulated to prevent its commercialization.

Conflict of Interest Projections

All elected and appointed public officials involved in setting gambling policy, or responsible for enforcing gambling regulations, should be covered by a strict code of ethics to prevent conflict of interest from entering into their decision making.

The code should include:

- Comprehensive financial disclosure for self, business, and immediate family, including amounts as well as sources of income, location and value of real estate holdings, directorships, clients, and customers.
- Rules prohibiting officials and legislators who have any financial interest in the gambling industry or establishments holding or seeking a gambling license from participating in making laws or decisions involving the industry.
- Rules restricting movement of personnel between gambling regulatory bodies and the gambling industry for at least one year.

Compulsive Gambling

The Commonwealth should support a compulsive gambling prevention and rehabilitation program.

Background on Gambling Position

After a one-year statewide study, consensus was reached in 1984 that LWVPA oppose any expansion of legalized gambling in the Commonwealth. In order to be able to comment on specific legislation, members also agreed that any bills to legalize additional forms of gambling must contain certain safeguards (see "Position in Detail" below). In 2007 we supported passage of legislation amending the gaming law to implement a more thorough process for criminal background investigations of casino applicants. In July of 2008 LWVPA testified in support of

legislation requiring casinos offering patrons total rewards cards to send those patrons monthly statements listing their gambling winnings and losses.

Transportation

Position in Brief: Promote energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems that afford access to housing and jobs, relieve congestion, and enhance the quality of life in communities of all sizes. Support predictable public funding that enables fiscally stable transportation systems to provide consistent levels of service.

Background on Transportation Position

LWVPA has been acting on transportation since 1971 based on national environmental quality and urban policy positions. In 1980 LWVUS decided to consolidate these positions to put greater emphasis on mass transportation systems. The new position was incorporated into the LWVUS position on Meeting Basic Human needs (see Impact on Issues).

Updated March 2023

Criminal Justice

Position in Brief: LWVPA believes that our justice system should be fair to all and that everyone who becomes a part of the system should be treated with dignity. The system should be effective, cost efficient, and data driven. Persons should not be deprived of constitutional rights to reasonable bail or effective counsel because they are poor, because they live in a poor community, or because it is politically or economically expedient. Barriers to successful reintegration into society, including damaging conditions in jails and prison, restrictions and requirements of re-entrants, and legal financial obligations that realistically cannot be paid, should be minimized.

Position in Detail:

Bail/Bonding

- Judges should use a research-based assessment protocol to determine whether an accused poses a danger to society or might fail to appear for trial.
- Uniform records should be kept and results reported on categories of type of bail, amount of monetary bail, cost to arrestee of bail, cost to county of those retained in jail, appearance rates (the percent of offenders that show up at court), the re-arrest rates of offenders released to the community, and conviction rates.
- Ability to pay should be a required factor in setting bail.
- Alternatives to commercial for-profit bail companies should be explored. If commercial bail companies operate, they should be regulated and their role in the criminal justice system carefully overseen.

Effective Counsel

- The American Bar Association 2011 recommendations for public defenders' offices should be enacted.
- The state should provide funding for public defenders' offices throughout the Commonwealth at a level that would provide resources to adequately defend indigent accused and to assure consistency from judicial district to judicial district.
- Training, continuing education, and state oversight of public defenders' offices, collecting and collating all relevant data on caseloads and outcomes should be provided.
- Public defenders should have caseloads which would enable them to provide adequate representation for their clients. If these are exceeded, resources to hire more lawyers or to contract with lawyers outside the office should be provided.
- Prosecutors should not be allowed to consider testimony and evidence that derives from practices other than best or recommended procedures during either plea bargaining or trials.
- Prosecutors and judges should ensure that all professionally recommended procedures for reliability of witnesses, testimony, and evidence are used. If these are not adhered to, defense counsel should be provided with state funding for investigators and expert witnesses to challenge reliability.

Alternatives to Incarceration

- Judges should receive ongoing training in alternatives to incarceration.
- Problem-solving courts accessible to all judicial districts should be developed.
- People with medical conditions such as mental health or drug abuse should be diverted away from prisons and provided with treatment programs.
- Alternatives to incarceration should be encouraged for non-violent offenders.
- Solely technical violations of parole should not result in a return to prison.
- Programs that have been proven to reduce the rate of recidivism should be implemented.
- Restorative Justice as an alternative to incarceration should be explored.
- The state should bear the cost of alternatives to incarceration and the prison/jail system and not charge offenders.
- Money saved from fewer incarcerations should be used to support alternatives to incarceration.

Appropriate Sentencing

- Pennsylvania should eliminate its "three strikes" law.
- There should not be mandatory minimum sentences.
- Plea bargaining should be monitored to avoid unnecessary pressure on accused.
- Sentencing guidelines should be reviewed for fairness.
- Those who have been imprisoned and subsequently found innocent should have recourse to compensation.
- The pardons and commutations programs should be depoliticized and revitalized.

Prison Conditions

- An office of ombudsman, independent of the Department of Corrections, should be established to investigate abuses within prison/jail walls.

- A state commission, independent of the Department of Corrections, should be established to oversee prison/jail conditions.
- Inmates should be paid for their labor at least 25% of minimum wage.

Prison Conditions – Health

- Corrections officers working with mentally ill prisoners should be trained and supervised by mental health professionals.
- All inmates should have access to good quality medical care and should be monitored to assure good health.
- The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) directives should be fully implemented.
- All prospective employees of the criminal justice system should be screened to determine a history of prior sexual abuse or harassment, attitudes and understanding of the dynamics of sexual abuse or harassment.
- Counseling for victims of sexual violence and harassment should be confidential and conducted by an independent organization with experience and expertise in the field of sexual violence.

Prison Conditions – Solitary Confinement

- Prisoners should not be placed in solitary confinement for more than 15 consecutive days.
- Juveniles and mentally ill prisoners should not be placed in solitary confinement.
- Use of solitary confinement should be tracked by prisoner characteristics, length of confinement and purpose of confinement.
- All inmates, even those without previously diagnosed mental illness, should have frequent and regular psychological evaluations throughout their incarceration in solitary confinement.
- Policies and procedures should be developed by the Department of Corrections to assure transparency and accountability related to assignment of inmates to solitary confinement, including those offenses which will result in the use of solitary confinement, reasonable notification, and opportunity for administrative hearing.

Re-Entry

- “Ban the box” legislation should be enacted, removing the conviction question from job applications, following the recommendations of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) best practices guidelines.
- “Ban the box” legislation should be enacted to remove the conviction question from public housing applications, with the exception of registered sex offenders and individuals who were convicted of manufacturing or processing controlled substances in a public housing facility.
- The Department of Labor and Industry should actively promote awareness and participation by businesses in the Federal Bonding Program.
- The Department of Labor and Industry should actively promote awareness and participation by businesses in the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program.
- Funding for appropriate transition and re-entry programs should be prioritized.-
- State and local governments should work with the non-profit private sector to create holistic community approaches toward reintegrating former prisoners.

Economic Issues.

- Fiscal impact statements, prepared by an independent group, and attached to every bill that proposes to alter sentencing or correction law should be required.
- Programs that are effective in reducing recidivism and initial criminal behavior should receive financial support from the state.

