Legislation Summary:

An Act improving public health through a common application for core food, health and safety-net program

Initial bill number: S612/H101 (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Sen. Sal N. DiDimenico and Rep. Jay D. Livingstone

This bill provides for a common application process for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) along with Mass Health and other "Safety Net" programs. Additional programs listed in the bill include "income supports under Chapters 117A and 118 of the General Laws, veterans services benefits under Chapter 115, child care subsidies, housing subsidies, fuel assistance and other needs-based health care, nutrition and shelter benefits." (Chapters 117A and 118 include emergency aid for elderly and disabled persons and aid to families with dependent children.) The Common Application could also certify school children for subsidized lunches and breakfasts.

This legislation should allow low-income individuals to apply to the several programs they may be eligible for without expending unnecessary resources and time going to a number of different agencies. Ideally, persons not aware of benefits they are entitled to will be able to apply and receive those benefits. The common application process should also provide efficiencies for the state government (when implemented) to make use of the same information and documentation for multiple programs and to give consistent feedback to applicants.

League position: The LWVUS Meeting Basic Human Needs position is lengthy. Some relevant parts include:
"Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care."
"Eligibility of all low-income individuals for assistance should be based on need. Eligibility should be established through simplified procedures such as a declaration of need, spot-checked in a manner similar to that used in checking the validity of income tax returns."