



Appendix

LWVMA PROGRAM POSITIONS 2019

These positions are shortened versions of the complete study and position summary. Please see *Where We Stand* (LWVMA) or *Impact on Issues* (LWVUS) for complete descriptions.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT (LWVUS)

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

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS (LWVUS)

Position on Evaluating Constitutional Amendment Proposals (2016)

The League will only support a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution if it advances and conforms to an LWVUS position.

In addition, the League believes the following should be considered in identifying an appropriate and well-crafted constitutional amendment:

- a) Whether the public policy objective addresses matters of such acute and abiding importance that the fundamental charter of our nation must be changed. Amendments are changes to a document that provides stability to our system and should be undertaken to address extreme problems or long-term needs.
- b) Whether the amendment as written would be effective in achieving its policy objective. Amendments that may be unenforceable, miss the objective, or have unintended consequences may not achieve the policy objective.
- c) Whether the amendment would either make our political system more democratic or protect individual rights. Most adopted amendments have sought to make our system more representative or to protect the rights of minorities.
- d) Whether the public policy objective can be achieved by a legislative or political approach that is less difficult than a constitutional amendment. In order to expend resources wisely, it is important to consider whether legislation or political action is more likely to succeed than an amendment.
- e) Whether the public policy objective is more suited to a constitutional and general approach than to a statutory and detailed approach. It is important to consider whether the goal can best be achieved by an overall value statement, which will be interpreted by the courts, or with specific statutory detail to resolve important issues and reduce ambiguity.

Position on Constitutional Conventions (2016)

The League is concerned that there are many unresolved questions about the powers and processes of an Article V Constitutional Convention. The League believes such a convention should be called only if the following conditions are in place:

- a) The Constitutional Convention must be transparent and not conducted in secret. The public has a right to know what is being debated and voted on;
- b) Representation at the Constitutional Convention must be based on population rather than one state, one vote, and delegates should be elected rather than appointed. The delegates represent citizens, should be elected by them, and must be distributed by U.S. population;
- c) Voting at the Constitutional Convention must be by delegate, not by state. Delegates from one state can have varying views and should be able to express them by individual votes;

- d) The Constitutional Convention must be limited to a specific topic. It is important to guard against a “runaway convention” which considers multiple issues or topics that were not initiated by the states;
- e) Only state resolutions on a single topic count when determining if a Constitutional Convention should be called. Counting state requests by topic ensures that there is sufficient interest in a particular subject to call a Convention and enhances citizen interest and participation in the process; and
- f) The validity of state calls for an Article V Constitutional Convention must be determined by the most recent action of the state. If a state has enacted a rescission of its call, that rescission must be respected by Congress.

VOTING RIGHTS (LWVUS)

Voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. (1982)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE (LWVUS)

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should:

- Enhance political equality for all citizens;
- Ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process;
- Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns;
- Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices;
- Ensure transparency and the public’s right to know who is using money to influence elections;
- Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office;
- Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and
- Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

(2016)

ELECTION PROCESS (LWVUS)

Apportionment

Congressional districts and government legislative bodies should be apportioned substantially on population. (1966, 1982)

VOTING SYSTEMS

GOAL: Voting systems should be easy to use, administer and understand, encourage high voter turnout, encourage real discussion on issues, promote minority representation and encourage candidates to run. (2005)

- The Massachusetts League supports instant runoff voting. Cost and complexity make 2-round runoff not acceptable. The term “instant runoff voting” used in the 2005 study has largely been replaced by the term “ranked choice voting.”

The League position is that the winner in single-seat elections should be required to obtain a majority of the votes cast. The League supports the use of ranked choice voting in all elections—federal, state and local—with three or more candidates in which a single candidate is the winner to assure the winning candidate receives a majority.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

GOAL: An effective state government; a strong executive branch with lines of authority and responsibility clearly defined. (1963)

The League supports:

- The power of the governor to reorganize the executive departments;
- The right of the governor to appoint policy-making department heads whose terms will be concurrent with the governor’s;
- Abolition of the Governor’s Council;
- A shortened ballot.

LEGISLATURE

GOAL: An effective state government; a strong and highly-visible legislative branch, districted on the basis of population into contiguous, compact, single-member districts by an appointed, bipartisan commission, and that maintains its traditional role as a democratic forum. (1967)

The League supports:

- Single-member districts to carry out the one-person, one vote concept; (1974)
- An appointed, bipartisan districting commission; (1973)
- A salary level high enough to attract and keep qualified legislators; (1967)
- The principle of free petition with some modification in the procedure for handling bills during the second year of the biennium; (1967)
- Strict adherence to the rules of late filing;
- Joint committees organized to reflect major areas of legislative concern, with majority and minority parties making their own committee assignments; (1967)
- Adequate legal and research help
- The Legislative Research Bureau; (1967)
- Legislative procedures and a calendar that promote both efficiency and democracy; (1988)
- A requirement that the Legislature prorogue (adjourn) no later than the election in state election years. (1988)

The League opposes:

- Limiting the legislative session to less than seven months; (1988)
- A filing fee. (1967)

PUBLIC PERSONNEL

GOAL: A public personnel system based upon merit principles and enlightened practices. (1969)

The League supports:

- Efforts to ensure a personnel administration adequately staffed and financed, directed by qualified persons;
- Improved and expedited methods of recruitment, examination and appointment;
- Improved incentives, such as proper remuneration, in-service training and wider opportunities for promotion;
- Modification of veterans' preference

The League opposes:

- Improper extension of civil service coverage.

FISCAL POLICY

GOAL: A state and local tax structure that will have an equitable impact on taxpayers and adequately support state services with consideration of the effect on the state and local economies; distribution of state aid in a manner that will equalize municipal resources; a comprehensive state budget system that will provide a basis for the evaluation of the cost and effectiveness of current state programs and long-range capital expenditures; up-to-date, uniform and accurate property valuation; and efficient management of the revenue collections systems. (1969-1979, 1992-1993)

Fiscal relationship between the state and local governments (2008)

The LWVMA believes that the fiscal relationship between the state and local government should incorporate and balance the following principles:

- **Equitability:** The LWVMA currently has positions that support the distribution of state funds in a manner that helps to equalize the resources of different. The equitability principle reinforces this position and its importance.

- Flexibility in local spending: Many municipal spending decisions are controlled either by state mandates or through laws that restrict municipal spending choices. This principle would support allowing municipalities to have more control over local spending decisions, in light of equitability in state revenue distribution.
- Flexibility in local revenue raising: Currently Massachusetts municipalities have very few options for raising revenue locally. This principle would support allowing municipalities more flexibility in raising revenue, in light of the lack of equitability in state revenue distribution.
- Dependability: A dependable budget relationship between the state and municipalities would ensure that state aid to municipalities is consistent and predictable year to year. On balance, dependability is of lesser importance than the other principles.

The LWVMA supports changes in state laws to ease the financial burden on municipalities in:

- Municipal employee health insurance;
- Municipal employee pensions.

Tax structure

The League's opposition to "new local non-property taxes by statewide mandate or local option" was eliminated. (2008) Proposals for new local non-property taxes by statewide mandate or local option will be evaluated based on the principles in the Fiscal Relationship section.

The League supports:

- The use of certain commonly-accepted criteria in judging taxes, particularly equitability, economic effect, flexibility, ease and cost of collection and adequacy of yield (1967, 1979, 1993)
- A greater reliance on state-collected taxes to reduce the burden on the property tax; (1970)
- Enforcement of taxing income-producing properties of tax-exempt institutions; (1970)
- An income tax with a graduated rate applied to income from all sources; (1970)
- Equal deductions and exemptions for earned and unearned income; (enacted 1967)
- A tax on rental income; (enacted 1967)
- Preferential treatment for long-term capital gains for income tax purposes; (1992)
- A capital gains tax that gives preferential treatment to the gain received from the sale of a primary residence; (1992)
- An increase in revenue from the sales tax by broadening its base, continued provision for exemptions of necessities such as food and medication and clothing with a lower limit; (1970, 1993)
- The application of "sunset" provisions to sales tax exemptions for the purpose of providing periodic legislative review as to whether these exemptions reflect the criteria of equitability, economic effect, ease and cost of collections and adequacy of yield; (1993)
- The broadening of the sales tax to include certain non-essential services sold to individuals when taxing those services would meet LWVMA criteria and when the greater burden will fall on those most able to pay; (1993)
- A modification in the estate tax to provide a full exemption for the surviving spouse; (enacted 1992)
- A modification in the estate tax to increase the level of no-tax status to correspond more closely to the federal exemption and to make this level subject to periodic review. (enacted 1992)
- Increased taxes on liquor and cigarettes (1979)
- User fees (1979)

The League opposes:

- A general sales tax (1970)

Earmarking revenues

The League opposes:

- Earmarking specific revenues for specific purposes. (1992)

If earmarking measures are proposed, the League would support:

- That it be statutory instead of constitutional (1992)
- That it be subject to periodic review; (1992)
- That it be subject to “sunset” provisions that limit the duration of each designation and allow the reversion of the earmarked revenue to the general fund. (1992)

Tax and spending limits

The League opposes:

- Constitutional amendments to impose tax and spending limits. (1980)

The League will evaluate statutory tax and spending limits at the state and local levels by applying the following criteria:

Tax and spending limits should:

- Allow a community to meet its own public service requirements;
- Recognize and provide for varying fiscal situations;
- Encourage good fiscal planning;
- Meet commonly accepted criteria used in judging taxes;
- Allow for proper budget procedures.

Tax and spending limits should not:

- Be borne unduly by the poor;
- Cause detrimental changes in the balance of power between state and local government;
- Encourage spending and taxing up to the limit.

State mandates (1979)

The League supports:

- Realistic fiscal notes on any enacted legislation that would have an impact on local budgets;
- A requirement for a greater-than-majority vote of the legislature for passage of major, unfunded, state-mandated programs;
- Adequate levels of state funding for state-mandated programs.

The League opposes:

- Absolute prohibition of state-mandated programs.

Distribution of State aid (1971)

The League supports:

- Distribution of state aid to cities and towns on an equalizing basis for public education and other municipal services;
- Continuation of state categorical grants for special programs, with the distribution of such funds on an equalizing basis.

Property tax administration

The League supports:

- A method of levying the property tax to allow different tax burdens on different types of property (classification), with local flexibility within a range established by legislation; (1980)
- The use of up-to-date and uniformly accurate property valuations to ensure that state aid distribution formulas and assessments, using local valuations as their base, are fair ;(1970)
- Strengthened and improved assessment procedures at both the state and local levels of government; (1970)
- State publication of an up-to-date manual of assessment guidelines; (1970)

- State-established qualification standards for those performing the assessment of property on both the state and local levels. (1970)

State budgetary procedures

The League supports:

- Transparency in the state budget and the budget process. A transparent state budget would be clearly written, unambiguous and understand-able for the general public. In addition, a transparent budget process would allow the general public to see how the budget is created. (2008)
- Timeliness in the fiscal relationship between the state and municipalities. For example, timeliness would encourage the state to provide firm information on state aid to municipalities earlier in the budget cycle. (2008)
- A comprehensive budget system; (1969)
- Identification of expenditures in terms of the services to be performed; (1969)
- Evaluation of governmental programs in relation to needs; (1969)
- Informed action by the Legislature and interested citizen groups; (1969)
- Long-range planning; (1969)
- Adequate accounting and auditing systems. (1969)

COUNTY GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL PLANNING

GOAL: An effective state government; an inter-mediate level of government to solve regional problems, either through a revised county structure or an emerging regionalism; regional planning on a statewide basis; high visibility for county and/or regional government; home rule for counties. (1984)

The League supports:

- Redrawing county lines to form more natural and functional regions; (1967)
- A county financial year to coincide with the state fiscal year;
- Fiscal authority for local county advisory (financial) boards;
- Administrative structures that would deliver services in an accountable and effective manner
- Evaluation of existing and potential county services in relation to cost, need, effectiveness and appropriateness to that level of government;
- Adequate and equitable financial resources to deliver services;
- Optional forms of county or regional government;
- Abolition of county government only at local discretion.

COURTS

GOAL: A judicial system that provides equal justice for all through effective, modern administration, qualified judicial personnel, a strengthened probation system, and procedures and practices that ensure due process of law.

Unified court system (1972)

The League supports:

- Greater exercise by the Supreme Judicial Court of the powers of general superintendence of the courts for the furtherance of justice and the improvement of administration;
- Strengthened management resources;
- State assumption of costs and state fiscal administration;
- Flexible assignment of judges to equalize the workload;
- The establishment of an intermediate appellate court. (Appeals Court established in 1972)

Selection of judges (1972)

The League supports:

- A nonpartisan selection system with a nominating commission composed of lawyers and lay members to propose names for all judicial appointments;
- Mandatory appointment by the governor from among the names proposed;
- A requirement that all judges be lawyers and give full time to their jobs;
- Orientation and in-service training for all judges.

Judicial conduct and tenure (1972)

The League supports:

- A nonpartisan judicial performance commission composed of judges, lawyers and lay members to receive and investigate complaints from any source about judicial conduct or disability. Upon recommendation of this commission, the Supreme Judicial Court shall have authority for discipline, removal or retirement of judges;
- A mandatory retirement of judges at age 70 with provision for limited service by recall.

Legal counsel for indigent people (1973)

The League supports:

- A public defender system with sufficient funding to meet the need for adequate salaries, expanded staff and strengthened administration;
- Supplementary and coordinated use of assigned counsel with public defenders subject to standardized rules and fees to assure adequate supply of counsel;
- Reduced-fee counsel for the near poor;
- Greater involvement of the private bar and law schools;
- A flexible indigence standard, with guidelines so as to neither cut off the needy nor overuse free counsel.

Pretrial detention (1973)

The League supports:

- Speedy trial;
- Elimination of the bail bondsman;
- Court-administered bail;
- Expanded use of Release on Recognizance (ROR).

Probation services (1973)

The League supports:

- State recruitment, training, evaluation and supervision of personnel;
- An adequate number of probation officers, effective use of personnel and expanded use of paraprofessionals and trained volunteers;
- The development of community resources through combined local support and state subsidy.

Indictment (1973)

The League supports:

- The defendant's option of screening by a preliminary district court hearing, screening by a grand jury or waiver of screening and a plea of guilty;
- The defendant's right to examine the transcript of the grand jury proceedings before trial.

Plea bargaining (1974)

The League supports:

- Standardized procedures for negotiations between the prosecution and defense and/or defendant;
- Approval of a tentative plea agreement by the court, followed by formal approval in open court.

Juries (1974)

The League supports:

- Use of a uniform, random selection method;
- Elimination of legal exemptions;
- Elimination of peremptory challenges;
- A statewide, computerized management system;
- Adequate pay and shorter service;
- Public education about citizen responsibility to serve;
- Use of 12-member juries in the superior court;
- Use of 6- or 12-member juries in the district courts at the option of the defendant;
- Use of unanimous verdicts in all criminal cases.

Sentencing

The League supports:

- Use of adequate and accurate information about the defendant; (1974)
- Required training, shared experience and continuing education for judges about sentencing; (1974)
- Legislative criteria and guidelines for sentencing; (1974)
- More sentencing alternatives; (1974)
- Written reasons for sentencing; (1974)
- The use of prison sentences for offenders who commit violent crimes against the person, habitual criminals and as a sanction of last resort; (1985)
- The use of adequately funded and supervised alternative punishments for offenders who commit nonviolent crimes, first offenders, non-habitual offenders, offenders who commit minor crimes and offenders where mitigating circumstances exist; (1985)
- Sentence lengths that encourage rehabilitation and reintegration into society. (1985)

The League opposes:

- Indeterminate sentences; (1974)
- The death penalty. (1985)

Merger of probate, juvenile and district court functions as they affect the family (1974)

The League supports:

- Court consolidation so that jurisdiction over family matters is no longer fragmented.

Until such time as court consolidation is accomplished, the League will work for:

- Coordinated efforts among courts and agencies in dealing with family-related problems;
- Continued support for the measures outlined in the existing corrections positions;
- Keeping status offenses under the jurisdiction of the court;
- Special training for juvenile judges, who would hear only juvenile cases.

Family law (1977)

The League supports:

- The legal right of adoptees to know their origins under the following conditions: the court directs that the medical records of the biological parents and general statements regarding heritage be provided the court at the request of an adoptee who has reached the age of majority, with the consent of the biological parents, and provides information to the adoptee regarding the identity of the biological parents;
- The same waiting period for all grounds for divorce;
- Need and ability to pay as the basis for decisions on questions of alimony, property settlement and child support;
- Statewide, uniform guidelines for alimony and child support;
- Mandatory separate counsel or advocate for children when custody is any issue in contested divorce actions;

- Community property measures.

HOME RULE

GOAL: An effective state government; home rule for Massachusetts cities and towns in local matters. (1966)

The League supports:

- Constitutional home rule for Massachusetts cities and towns; (enacted 1966)
- Sharing of functions among all levels of government;
- Right of federal, state and regional governments to set standards of performance in broad areas of public concern;
- Cost sharing by all levels of government to implement standards;
- Statutory implementation of home rule.

CITIZEN RIGHTS (LWVUS)

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation

Democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government.

Governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible. (1984)

Individual Liberties

Individual liberties are guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. Individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged. (1982)

NATURAL RESOURCES (LWVUS)

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

Natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health. (1958 – 1986)

Resource management

LWVUS believes resource management decisions must be based on a thorough assessment of population growth and of current and future needs. The inherent characteristics and carrying capacities of each area's natural resources must be considered in the planning process. Policy makers must take into account the ramifications of their decisions on the nation as a whole as well as on other nations.

To assure the future availability of essential resources, government policies must promote stewardship of natural resources. Policies that promote resource conservation are a fundamental part of such stewardship. Resources such as water and soil should be protected. Consumption of nonrenewable resources should be minimized. Beneficiaries should pay the costs for water, land and energy development projects. Reclamation and reuse of natural resources should be encouraged.

Protection and management of natural resources are responsibilities shared by all levels of government. The federal government should provide leadership, guidance and financial assistance to encourage regional planning and decision making to enhance local and state capabilities for resource management.

Environmental protection and pollution control

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

Environmental protection and pollution control, including waste management, should be considered a cost of providing a product or service. Consumers, taxpayers and ratepayers must expect to pay some of the costs. LWVUS supports policies that accelerate pollution control, including federal financial assistance for state and local programs.

Public participation

LWVUS supports public understanding and cooperation as essential to the responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

SOCIAL POLICY (LWVUS)

Promote social and economic justice. Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

GOAL: The prevention of child abuse and neglect; the protection and care of children experiencing abuse and neglect. (1991)

The League supports:

- A significant role played by government in ensuring meaningful and adequately funded services to child experiencing abuse and neglect, and to their families;
- Programs and policies that emphasize the safety and protection of the child, with family preservation an important, but subordinate goal;
- A strong focus on child abuse prevention, including education programs for both children and adults;
- An extension of the statutes of limitations for bringing accusations of child abuse;
- Measures to minimize the trauma suffered by children in child abuse proceedings, including the following revisions of standards courtroom procedures:
 - Scheduling priority given to child abuse cases;
 - Videotape and closed-circuit television testimony of the child permitted in conjunction with procedures to protect the rights of the accused;
 - Limited hearsay exceptions allowed in conjunction with clear judicial guidelines to ensure the reliability of witnesses and preserve the right of the accused;
 - Measures taken to provide a courtroom atmosphere that is not intimidating to children;
 - Special training for judges and other investigatory and judicial personnel in dealing sensitively with children
- Development of legislative sentencing guidelines for child abuse perpetrators, with therapy as an integral part of the sentence.

CORRECTIONS

GOAL: A small corrections system that provides opportunities for the rehabilitation of the adult and juvenile offender. (pre-1965)

The League supports:

- Measures to protect the civil and individual rights of the offender and to promote the offender's rehabilitation through individualized treatment;
- Legislation to separate administrative functions from areas of professional judgment and to delineate clear lines of authority and accountability in the state agency responsible for juvenile programs;
- Measures to provide competitive salaries for trained personnel and measures to implement public personnel standards;
- Programs in existing institutions and in communities for prevention, detection and treatment of juvenile delinquency;
- Measures to provide sufficient prison space to ensure humane living conditions for prisoners;

- Measures that provide sufficient prison space at the minimum security and pre-release levels to permit the gradual reintegration of the prisoner into society; (1985)
- Programs within the Department of Corrections that gradually allow the prisoner more freedom and more responsibility as merited; (1985)
- Programs that provide supervision and support upon release from prison; (1985)
- Programs for women within the Department of Corrections that include job training, education and training for parenting; (1985)
- Separate facilities for the female mentally ill and criminally insane; (1985)
- Improved opportunities for mother-child contact; (1985)
- Access to an adequate range of reintegration services for female inmates; (1985)

DAY CARE

GOAL: A coordinated state policy for quality day care for the children of Massachusetts with adequate funding for implementation by the responsible state agencies. (1984)

The League supports:

- The development of a state policy on child day care programs;
- Minimum standards of quality for child day programs;
- State licensing for family day care, group day care centers and after-school day care with clear procedures for such licensing;
- Adequate staffing and funding of state agencies responsible for enforcement of state licensing requirements and regulations;
- State regulation of family day care, group day care and after-school child care programs;
- Limiting state support of day care to children of low-income families, children of handicapped parents, handicapped children or children in need of protective services.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

GOAL: The prevention of domestic violence. A strong statewide response to domestic violence that is integrated, interdisciplinary and adequately funded, involving all segments of the criminal justice system, the medical community, the schools, social services, and the private sector, with a primary focus on the safety of victims. (1993)

Police

The League supports:

- Ongoing training about domestic violence of all police;
- Policies favoring the use of arrest as a preferred response to a domestic violence incident;
- Carefully followed procedures for gathering and preserving evidence so that cases can be prosecuted even if victims refuse to testify.

Courts

The League supports:

- Ongoing training about domestic violence of all judges and court personnel;
- Expedited court resolution of domestic violence cases;
- Timely sharing of relevant information among courts, as well as with other parties in the criminal justice system;
- Consideration by the probate court of a history of domestic abuse when making divorce, child custody and visitation decisions.

District attorneys

The League supports:

- Statewide availability of well-trained and funded victim/witness advocates;
- Training and domestic violence of district attorney staff;
- Policies encouraging prosecution, even when victims are unwilling to testify.

Probation

The League supports:

- Training about domestic violence of all probation officers;
- Strict monitoring of compliance with probation;
- Sanctions for probation violation.

Medical community

The League supports:

- Training of medical personnel in recognizing signs of domestic violence and treating victims;
- Clearly defined protocols for treating domestic violence victims;
- An educational role played by medical providers;
- Provision of support services, such as social service referrals, support groups and literature.

Schools

The League supports:

- Educational programs and policies, beginning in the earliest grades that focus on violence prevention, conflict resolution and self-esteem building.

Services for victims

The League supports:

- Coordinated and well-publicized services for victims and their families, including:
 - Shelters
 - Transitional and long-term affordable housing;
 - Counseling and support groups;
 - Interpreters;
 - Hotlines;
 - Job training
- Involvement of community groups and the clergy in speaking out against domestic violence, making referrals and providing services
- Special attention system wide paid to the needs of child victim witnesses.

Programs for batterers

The League supports:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing programs;
- Research into other treatment methods.

Other

The League supports:

- Public campaigns to raise awareness of domestic violence.

The League opposes:

- Glorification of violence in the media.

EDUCATION (LWVUS)

Equal access to education. (1967)

Statewide standards (1967)

The League supports:

- The principle that the state Board of Education should set minimal educational standards for local public school systems with reasonable criteria for implementation;
- The principle that the state Board of Education should provide services to assist local schools and to motivate them to improve the quality of education;
- Reasonable measures to implement these services;
- Adequate teacher certification.

Equal opportunity (1948)

The League supports:

- Increased school aid to localities on an equalizing basis.

Fiscal autonomy (1977)

The League supports:

- Fiscal autonomy of the Department of Education within the appropriation granted by the legislature;
- Financial independence of school committees.

The League opposes:

- Measures that require school committees to set tax rates and send out tax bills to fund school department budgets.

School committee-teacher relationships

The League supports:

- Public comment before collective bargaining contract proposals are drafted, publication of the proposals before negotiations begin and progress reports on negotiations; (1976)
- School committee authority to set education policy; (1976)
- Provisions in the law for the evaluation of all professional school personnel on a regular basis through the use of specified procedures. (1986)

School choice (1994)

The League opposes:

- Statewide interdistrict public school choice.

If statewide interdistrict public school choice is established, the League would consider the following features essential:

- Equalizing, consistent and mandatory state funding for public school districts;
- No punitive loss of state aid to sending schools, but oversight and assistance designed to improve problem areas in order to protect students who remain;
- Clear, timely, easily-obtainable information about the process by which students apply for admission to receiving schools and about criteria used to assess applicants for admission made available in every language used in the school district; parent participation in decision making when process and criteria are established;
- Vigorous and adequately-funded outreach programs to provide parents with timely and accurate information available in every language used in the school district about the choice program and about individual schools;
- Admission and assessment of choice students designed to achieve equality and student body diversity with equal access for all who apply in a timely manner; transportation programs to assure such access;
- Impartial periodic evaluation of the educational effectiveness of school choice for both sending and receiving schools.

Special Education (1999, 2000)

The League supports:

- The principle state special education programs should ensure that students are educated to reach their full individual potential, learning to the best of their abilities the skills they will need to lead productive lives as informed and contributing citizens in their communities;
- The following measures that are vital to the success of special education programs:
 - Comprehensive outreach and assessment to identify and serve children in need of special education services as early as possible;
 - Review and, if need, revision of the processes and procedures used to identify children in need of special education services to ensure their effectiveness and accuracy;
 - Appropriate and on-going training of regular education teachers and staff to address the needs of special education students in their classrooms
- The development of practical and timely measurements which the public can use to evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs;
- Widely disseminated and clear communications with parents, educators, and others about the availability and applicability of special education services;
- The principle that local school districts should be responsible for the provision of services to special education students which meet the goals of their Individual Education Plans;
- The principle that federal and state governments assume the major burden of the costs (including transportation) associated with special education mandates:
 - Funding should be based upon actual costs, rather than arbitrary formulas;
 - The federal government should fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to the maximum amount provided under law;
 - Local financial responsibility for special education costs of individual students should be capped; the state should fund costs due to unexpected special education enrollments;
 - Where feasible, local school districts should access other existing sources of funding (e.g. Medicaid, private medical insurance, grants, etc.)

Higher education (1961)

The League supports:

- Measures to strengthen the state-supported institutions of higher education, including administrative independence with respect to budget and personnel;
- A sound program of state-supported 2-year colleges under the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges.

Charter Schools (2017)

The League supports:

- The exclusive authority of the state to establish and oversee charter schools, and to adopt and enforce regulations relating to them
- State approval and regulation of the number and location of charter schools
- The establishment of charter schools only on a not-for-profit basis
- Funding both district schools and charter schools in ways that do not disadvantage either type of school. The state should have a formula to adequately fund both district schools and charter schools, and should develop methods for addressing the financial impact of charter schools on sending school districts.
- State responsibility for fostering robust cooperation and collaboration between charter schools and district schools. This includes, among other things, fostering the sharing of innovation and ideas between charter and district schools and minimizing the competition between them for scarce resources.
- State responsibility for the accuracy, transparency and ease of accessibility of charter school reports, to ensure accountability
- Equal access to charter schools for all students. This includes making every effort to have charter school applicant pools be comparable to the populations of their sending districts.

- Community and parent/guardian engagement in governance of charter schools. A charter school board of trustees should include, among others, community representatives, and charter school boards should seek to actively engage parents/guardians of currently enrolled students.

The League opposes:

- For-profit charter schools

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY (LWVUS)

The League supports access to education, employment and housing. (1967)

HANDGUN CONTROL

GOAL: Elimination of the private possession of handguns (1974) and assault weapons (1989).

The League supports:

- Limitation of the sale and possession of handguns and assault weapons to law enforcement and military personnel;
- A possible exception for sportsmen if the guns are used and stored away from the home under controlled conditions.

Until such a time as a ban on the private possession of handguns and assault weapons becomes law the League supports:

- Improved and standardized licensing procedures;
- Training in the use of handguns and assault weapons and the responsibilities of ownership;
- Education of the public to the dangers of the handgun in the home;
- Strict enforcement of the present laws concerning handgun ownership;
- Measures to encourage the removal of all handguns and assault weapons from the home and street.

HEALTH CARE (LWVUS)

GOALS: A basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents. Other U.S. health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care.

BASIC LEVEL OF CARE: Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health, acute care, long-term care and mental health care. Dental, vision and hearing care also are important but lower in priority. Consumers/ patients should be permitted to purchase services or insurance coverage beyond the basic level.

FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATION: The LWVUS favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums. As the U.S. moves toward a nation health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League.

LWVUS supports administration of the U.S. health care system either by a combination of the private and public sectors or by a combination of federal, state and/or regional government agencies.

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

HEALTH CARE (LWVMA)

GOAL: An affordable health care system that provides equal access to quality health care for all (1983)

The League supports:

- A state and regional health care planning system that will set guidelines for allocation of health care resources in Massachusetts;
- Development of a state health plan by regional planning committees with final coordination and implementation at the state level;
- Coordination of planning, financing and regulation so that goals of the plan are accomplished;
- Public financing of health care provided by federal and state taxes for people who cannot pay;
- Citizen participation in planning, coordinating, financing, regulating, managing and monitoring, including consumer representation on planning committees;
- Consumer education on maintaining health, use of the health care system, costs and patient' rights;
- Emphasis on preventive medicine, use of alternative settings, individual responsibility for health maintenance, control of environmental hazards and consumer education;
- Rigorous monitoring on a regular basis by government, citizens and the health care community;
- Procedures for licensing, accreditation and certification of institutions and professionals that assure competence and reasonable standards in the practice of health care;
- Improving access to health care by removing geographic, linguistic and cultural barriers.

MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS (LWVUS)

LWVUS believes that one of the goals of social policy in the United States should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty. (1989)

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

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

Preventing and Reducing Poverty

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

Access to Health Care

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

Access to Transportation

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

Further Guidelines and Criteria

Criteria for Income Assistance

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

Criteria for Supportive Services

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

Criteria for Housing Supply

The following considerations can be applied to programs and policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family:

- The responsibility for achieving national housing goals rests primarily with the federal government, which should:
 - Assure that our economic system is functioning to produce and maintain sufficient decent housing for citizens at all income levels;
 - Compensate for any failure or inadequacy of the system by building, financing, renting and selling homes to those citizens whose housing needs are not being met;
 - Give a variety of incentives to local jurisdictions to encourage them to provide within their boundaries an adequate supply of decent housing for low- and moderate-income groups;

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

GOAL: Access to decent housing and a suitable living environment affordable for all. (2008)

The League supports programs, policies and regulations to address the housing needs of low- and moderate-income families and individuals, which should include:

- Income eligibility requirements for the purchase and rental of subsidized affordable housing that are adjusted periodically to reflect current economic factors;
- Reasonable asset limitations for income-eligible households purchasing or renting subsidized affordable housing that take into consideration assets needed for retirement;
- Periodic review of income and asset limitations and eligibility requirements;
- Definitions of units eligible for inclusion on each community's Subsidized Housing Inventory that allow for the counting of units that are priced to be affordable but would not be included under the state's traditional definition of affordable housing – however, there should be legally binding agreements that require all such eligible units remain affordable long-term and restricted to income-eligible households;
- Restrictions on affordable rental and ownership housing units so that the units remain affordable in perpetuity;
- Streamlined permitting procedures for Smart Growth incentive programs that effectively encourage the use of Smart Growth principles, with funding sources that are consistent, reliable and predictable.

PUBLIC POLICY ON REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES (LWVUS)

Public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES

GOAL: Freedom of individuals to make informed reproductive decisions based on their own convictions and beliefs (1972)

The League supports:

- Emphasis on preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies;
- Sex education in the schools and community;
- Access to family planning information, services and devices to people who want them;
- Wide distribution of information about contraception and sterilization;
- Treating abortion as a medical procedure to be decided upon by a woman and her physician;
- Public funding for birth control and abortion services for the poor;
- Research on birth control methods.

The League opposes:

- Restrictive birth control and abortion laws

LEGALIZED CASINO GAMBLING

GOAL: Opposition to the establishment of legalized casino gambling in Massachusetts. (1982)

With casino gambling now legal, the League supports;

- Limited locations, causing the least detrimental social and environmental impact, with acceptable road access and public transportation and as part of a resort hotel complex sited with both local town and regional support;
- Rigid standards set by the state, possible including hours of operation, dress codes, age limits for employment and participation, licensing of employees, relationships of gaming industry to public officials, credit and junket restrictions and liquor regulations;
- Allowing stricter local regulations, requiring that the establishment comply with local zoning bylaws, building codes and public safety requirements;
- Especially created gaming commission (separate from the Lottery Commission) to issue gaming licenses, with approval by local town governing bodies, commission members not all coterminous with the governor and a separation of the bodies granting licenses and those responsible for oversight and audit;

- All costs for license investigation and supervision paid from monies collected in non-refundable filing and licensing fees;
- Percent of taxation on industry winnings more than 7% and as much as 20%;
- All revenues collected by state, a portion returned to the communities impacted and demonstrating need, the remaining monies returned to the state's general fund.

TRANSPORTION

In 2013 the League of Women Voters Massachusetts adopted by concurrence the position the League of Women Voters of California.

Position in Brief

Support a transportation system to move people and goods which includes a variety of transportation modes, with emphasis on increased public transportation services and other viable alternatives to reduce vehicle miles traveled; is efficient, convenient, and cost effective; is safe and secure; serves all segments of the population and diverse geographic needs; minimizes harmful effects on the environment; is integrated with land use; and is supported by extensive public education.

Positions

- Transportation and land use planning should be integrated to promote reduced vehicle mile traveled through a jobs/housing balance and requirements that land use development facilitate use of transit and other alternatives to single occupant vehicles.
- Planning for transportation should promote:
- Strategies to influence travel behavior, such as fees, taxes and tolls, combined with mitigation measures for low income persons;
- Alternative to single occupant vehicle travel, such as high occupancy vehicle lanes, expanded transit, car/van pools and bicycle lanes;
- Other strategies to improve traffic flow, such as flextime and telecommuting;
- Project evaluation processes which include early and informed public participation, analysis of alternative routes and modes, analysis of costs and benefits of each alternative, and consideration of consistency with regional and state transportation systems.
- Transportation funding should come from all levels of government, but regional and local levels should have maximum flexibility to select the modes and projects on which to spend allocated funds. User fees and other revenues derived from transportation related sources should be designated for transportation uses, including use of highway users' taxes for transportation-related services such as smog control and transit. A variety of other funding methods are appropriate, including general funds, sales tax revenues and private sources such as developer fees. All funding should be evaluated in terms of equitable sharing of transportation costs, effect on travel behavior and indirect economic impacts.
- Government responsibility includes:
- Provision for early and informed public participation in the planning process;
- Cooperation and coordination among agencies and between different levels of government;
- Maintenance of existing transportation systems.
- The state should be responsible for setting statewide standards and for planning on a statewide level with provision for a strong regional role.
- Regional decision making should include extensive local input.

Position History: LWV California Adopted 1981; Revised 1985; New Position 1991; Readopted at last convention. LWV Massachusetts Adopted by concurrence 2013.

AGRICULTURE (LWVUS, 2014)

Provide financial support for agriculture that includes disaster assistance, crop insurance, need-based loans and incentives to adopt best management practices. Support should be extended to specialty crops, such as fruits,

vegetables and nuts, to new production methods, such as organic, hydroponic, and urban practices, and to farms that supply local and regional markets.

Supports policies that increase competition in agricultural markets. Clean air and water regulations should apply to all animal and aquaculture production and processing facilities.

Government should fund basic research related to agriculture and provide adequate safety of our food supply.

Supports government developing and requiring more informative and standardized definitions on product labeling. Food labeling and advertising should display only approved health and safety claims and an accurate representation of the required ingredient and nutrition lists. The League supports consumer education about labeling of foods developed using any new technology.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING (LWVUS, 2014)

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