



POSITION PAPERS

Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy

*We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right,
the knowledge and the confidence to participate.*

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DELAWARE
POSITION PAPERS 2017-2019
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INTRODUCTION

The purposes of the League of Women Voters are to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected government issues. Membership is open to any person, male or female, who is 16 years of age or older.

The League is a nonpartisan organization and never supports or opposes any political party or any candidate. Nevertheless, in carrying out its purposes, members, as individuals, are encouraged to become involved in all phases of political activity. As an organization, the League acts on governmental issues based on LEAGUE PRINCIPLES and/or LEAGUE POSITIONS.

The PRINCIPLES are concepts of government which the League considers basic to our democratic system of government. League POSITIONS are adopted by the national, state, and local Leagues. They are the product of study, discussion and agreement by members and express the League's point of view regarding an issue.

Both PRINCIPLES and NATIONAL POSITIONS may be the basis of action on state and local issues when applicable.

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 development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

LWVUS-LWVEF Mission Statement and Core Values

Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy

We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy

LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

SUMMARY OF LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS 2018-2020

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

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/MIP finance regulation should 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. Supports public financing, full disclosure, abolishing SuperPACs 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.

Citizen Rights

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation. Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate

informed understanding and public participation in government decision-making.

Evaluate 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, such as: limited to a specific topic, full transparency, delegates selected by population, and voting by delegates not by state.

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.

Congress and the Presidency

Congress. Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision making 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.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

United Nations.

Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.

Trade

Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade: and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

Developing Countries

Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

Arms Control

Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

Military Policy and Defense Spending

Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

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

Natural Resources & 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 physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with 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 Resources. 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 and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

Nuclear. Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

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.

Agriculture Policy

Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices, and increased reliance on the free market.

Federal Agriculture Policies. Provide financial support to subsidize agriculture in specific instances, enforce federal antitrust laws to ensure competitive agricultural markets, and apply clean air and water regulations to all animal and aquaculture production. The federal government should fund basic agricultural research to provide adequate safety of our food supply

SOCIAL POLICY

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

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 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 for essential support services.

Housing Supply. 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 child care 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 Control

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

The 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. The 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.

STATE GOVERNMENT

DELAWARE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Support of measures to promote an effective and responsive legislative branch of state government.

Specifically, the League supports:

A Strong Committee System An effective committee system is a primary part of an effective legislature. Caucus discussion is not a substitute for committee activity. All bills should be studied and discussed in committee.

The committee should provide a written report which includes analysis, rationale, and minority opinion regarding relevant legislation so that the entire legislature need not duplicate work more effectively done by a standing committee. The committees should have the power to serve as screening agencies for the legislature as a whole, but chairmen should not have absolute control over bills under consideration.

Areas of standing committee responsibilities should be consolidated to facilitate member attendance and be based primarily on Cabinet Departments. Committees should parallel one another in the House and Senate. This would facilitate meeting jointly. Committee meetings should be open, scheduled in advance, and well publicized after scheduling. Meetings of both special and standing committees are needed during periods when the General Assembly is recessed.

Publish Rules Both Houses should continue to have published rules. Joint rules and administrative coordination would enable better flow of information between houses.

Calendar and Bill Management

Bill synopses and statements of intent should be continued.

Use of multiple sponsorship and a consent calendar should continue.

The number of votes needed for passage of a bill should be based on the number of legislators who do not abstain from voting because of conflict of interest rather than on the total number elected to each house. (This would require a constitutional amendment.)

Professional Staff

The professional staff should be adequate to give technical as well as clerical support to the General Assembly and its committees. It should be placed largely under Legislative Council in order to serve both chambers on a nonpartisan basis.

June 30 Adjournment Date

There is no need at present to remove the constitutional restriction of the June 30 adjournment date. Because we have a part-time legislature with part-time salary, a preset, "guaranteed" session time enables the legislators to schedule job commitments with less conflict and inconvenience.

Effective Budget Process

The General Assembly should continue to use the budgetary process to review and evaluate state programs. Budgeting should be based on performance and program priority.

Effective record keeping, reporting, and evaluation by the Joint Finance Committee is necessary.

ETHICS

Support of legislation in the areas of campaign finance, conflict of interest, financial disclosure, and lobbying disclosure.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware believes that democracy requires confidence in all its governmental officials. The public interest must be, and must appear to be, the primary motive behind official acts. Ethical guidelines are vital. The following recommendations and guidelines are directed toward instilling confidence in government in Delaware.

Financing of State Election Campaigns

A campaign finance system should allow a combination of public and private financing. *(Added in 1999 based on LWW US position.)*

Full and timely disclosure of all except minimal campaign contributions and expenditures should be required.

The use of cash should be severely limited.

Each candidate should designate one treasurer to coordinate, control, and report all financial transactions.

The length of campaigns should be limited, consistent with full exposure of the candidates, especially the challengers. *(Note: Support for tax credits and deductions for campaign contributions was dropped by 1999 state convention).*

Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure

Certain governmental officials should disclose their financial interests and abide by guidelines for lessening the possibility of conflict of interest. Those officials who should be included are:

- All elected state officials and candidates for said positions.
- All appointed state officials whether paid or unpaid (e.g. judges, cabinet secretaries, commission members, etc.) but excluding members of advisory groups that have no policy making powers and/or authority to expend funds.
- Only those state employees that are in policy making positions and/or have authority to expend funds.

Financial disclosure should include information covering only sources of income, financial and property holdings, and debts of the official and his/her spouse and dependent children. Gifts and entertainment of significant cumulative value should also be reported (except when received from members of the family).

Restrictions that tend to eliminate conflict of interest should be mandated by law and should include prohibitions against:

- Using official position to obtain financial gain for themselves, their families and businesses;
- Accepting gifts of value if it could be reasonably understood to be given to influence official action;
- Misusing confidential information;
- Regulating a business with which the official is associated or has a substantial financial interest.

However, the law should not be too restrictive, thereby discouraging government services.

Similar legislation could also apply to persons in analogous positions in political subdivisions of the state, but it is not essential to cover these persons under a state law. Local ordinances could be employed to accomplish such coverage.

Lobbying Regulation

Communication between legislators and citizens is essential; no regulation should inhibit such communication. Because of the fact and public impression that organized groups have a disproportionate influence on legislation, some accounting of their activities should be made available to the public by law and funds spent on direct lobbying should be reported.

Contingent fee lobbying (fee based on outcome of legislation) and gifts to public officials which would not otherwise be offered should be prohibited. (Entertainment would be excluded from this proviso but should be disclosed.)

Ethics Commission

An independent, bipartisan ethics commission with overlapping terms long enough to isolate its members from political pressure should collect, distribute and investigate campaign finance, financial disclosure, and lobbying disclosure statements.

Monitoring and enforcement responsibilities, including subpoena power, should be provided.

The Ethics Commission should issue advisory opinions as to conflicts of interest.

REAPPORTIONMENT/REDISTRICTING

The League of Women Voters of Delaware believes that reapportionment and redistricting of legislative districts must be accomplished in an open, unbiased manner and in accordance with federal mandates for substantial population equality adjusted after each decennial census. We believe this could best be accomplished by an independent commission type group that would have primary responsibility.

Commission composition

- The commission should not be dominated by a single political party and should have statewide representation.
- Its members could best be selected through a nominating committee created for this purpose rather than directly by members of the legislature.
- Non-partisan, or at least bi-partisan membership is essential.
- State office holders should not serve.
- Commission members should be limited in seeking office in the immediate future.

Various criteria should be considered when redrawing district lines. In addition to substantial population equality, we believe the most important are:

- Contiguous territory
- Compactness
- Not favoring any person or political party

- Consideration of minority representation
- Incumbent protection should not be a consideration.

If the increase in population is deemed sufficient, an increase in the number of legislators may be recommended when a new plan is being developed.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Alternative Election Methodologies -New study item: *LWVDE take up a broad overview study of alternative election methodologies, with a goal of selecting for further study any of those methodologies that appear to have promise to improve the democratic process in Delaware. Such alternative election methodologies include Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV; also known as Instant Runoff Voting, or IRV), approval voting, and proportional voting (multi-representative districts). (Adopted convention 2019)*

DELAWARE STATE CONSTITUTION

Support of a constitution for the State of Delaware which would be confined to broad principles and would promote efficient and responsive government.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware believes:

A constitution should be confined to broad principles in order to be as flexible and brief as possible. (1966)

The Bill of Rights should protect the following substantive rights: religion; speech; press; petition and assembly; freedom from invasion of privacy, search and seizure except by due process; freedom from discrimination due to race, sex, national origin, religion or ancestry. (1970)

The Bill of Rights should protect the following procedural rights; prohibition against deprivation of life, liberty or property without due process; prohibition against double jeopardy, privilege against self-incrimination; equal protection of the law; right to be charged and tried promptly; public court hearings; no court costs assessed unless convicted; right to trial by jury and bail. (1970)

The constitution should provide for a strong executive branch with the governor given the power to appoint non-elected top officials. *(The original position, adopted in 1967, referred to the governor appointing all top officials including four that were, and still are, elected. In 1990 the offices of attorney general and auditor were reconsidered, resulting in no consensus for their appointment or election. In 1999 state convention also dropped treasurer and insurance commissioner. The position that the governor and lieutenant should be elected on the same ballot was dropped in 1990).*

Details of legislative action should be removed from the constitution, but areas of responsibility should be outlined. (1967) Qualifications for legislators should be given. Guidelines for writing, introduction and passage of legislation should be included. (1968) The number of votes needed for passage of a bill should be based on the number of legislators who do not abstain from voting because of conflict of interest rather than the total number elected to each house. (1972)

The constitution should reflect the structure of a modern judiciary system. *(The original position with respect to the judiciary system was very detailed. The 1999 state convention recognized that some portions have been accomplished and that it would be necessary to do a substantial study of the system before advocating further changes.)*

The rights of local government should be protected by the constitution. Such governments should be allowed to exercise any power not denied by their own charters, state law or state constitution. (1970)

The constitution should provide for the row offices to be appointive rather than elective since they have no policy making roles. The functions of said offices should be the responsibility of the level of government which would oversee them most efficiently. The principles of a good merit system should be employed in selecting these officials in order to avoid the discontinuities that accompany reliance on patronage. (1971)

The office of Clerk of Peace should be abolished. Court-related offices (Sheriff, Prothonotary, Register in Chancery) should be placed under the state judicial system (1971)

(Note: Prothonotary and Register in Chancery are now appointed by the Courts they serve).

The present system of adopting amendments to the constitution by passage in two successive General Assemblies has been adequate. (1969)

PUBLIC PRIVATE / PARTNERSHIPS

The following position is the result of study conducted in 1998-1999.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports the use of public/private partnerships by governments in Delaware if a project can be better undertaken with public/private cooperation. Public input, careful controls and adequate safeguards need to be part of these partnerships.

The League recognizes that each partnership is unique, and in order to guarantee success of a project while protecting the public sector, the project should meet the following conditions and criteria:

- The initial policy decisions should be made by the appropriate legislative bodies with provisions made for community input in a timely manner.
- A real commitment from both public and private sectors is needed.
- The agreement should have clear-cut objectives with identifiable goals and evaluation systems and specific provisions for termination, if necessary.
- Projects should be open to public scrutiny for regular and timely review.
- The agreement should call for shared risks.
- The public partner must have oversight and monitoring responsibility which includes financial auditing.
- The agreement should include provisions for good communication between partners and all parties concerned.
- Any on-going committee or board which oversees a project should include representatives of the local community.

SOCIAL POLICY

JUSTICE SYSTEM/CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Justice System - Continuing Study: A re-evaluation of Delaware's criminal justice system and the impact of the current policies and practices on society. (Action will continue to be taken under LWVDE current position.)

The study is intentionally worded broadly so that the study committee can start where its sees the most effective effort and timeliness. (Adopted May 2013 at Convention, re-adopted since then through 2019.)

Support for the adoption of consistent policies which, within budgetary constraints, will permit the disposition of offenders in the best interests of society, the victims, and the offenders and their families.

- We oppose mandatory sentencing.
- We support the expansion of drug courts and mental health courts for all nonviolent offenders and the appropriate science-based health, mental health and addiction evaluation and treatment of all offenders. *(adopted by Convention 5/2005)*
- We support of uniformity in the operation of the Family Court system; automatic expungement of certain juvenile records; state provided diagnostic services, care, education and treatment to age 21 for youths and young adults who have mental or physical illness or who are developmentally delayed or are substance abusers or abused/neglected; strong educational programs on the rights of victims of family violence. *(Amended by Convention 5/2005: more detail under the Family Court position.)*

Courts:

While recognizing the need for budget limitations, the League supports:

- Provision of all necessary tools to facilitate sound decision-making by the judiciary;
- Employment of independent professional evaluators to assess the costs, benefits and long-range effects of current sentencing practices.
- Use of such evaluation results as guidelines for executive and legislative branches of state government in developing legislation and by the judiciary in exercising sentencing responsibilities.
- Use in the courts of a range of sentencing alternatives where such alternatives do not create a danger to society or jeopardize rehabilitation of the offender. Alternatives should include but not be limited to restitution, work service, work referral, and other programs of a constructive nature.
- Judicial discretion in making sentencing decisions rather than mandatory sentences imposed in statute. *(Adopted by Convention, 2003)*
- Expansion of drug courts and mental health courts for all non violent offenders and appropriate science based health, mental health and addiction treatment for all offenders. *(Adopted by Convention, 2005)*

Corrections:

While recognizing the need for budget limitations, the League supports:

- Continuation by the Department of Corrections of programs and policies to improve screening and classification for both detainees and convicted offenders;
- Opportunities for offenders to acquire training and skills and to receive mental health treatment and treatment for addictions so that they may function as responsible citizens and be integrated into the law-abiding community. *(Psychological treatment and treatment for substance abuse added by Convention, 1999).*

GUN CONTROL

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semiautomatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer protection.
(LWVUS position applies)

FAMILY COURT, RELATED STATE PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Support of uniformity in the operation of the Family Court system; automatic expungement of certain juvenile records; state provided diagnostic services, care, education and treatment to age 21 for youths and young adults who have mental or physical illness or who are developmentally delayed or are substance abusers or abused/neglected; strong educational programs on the rights of victims of family violence. *(Amended 5/2005 Convention)*

There should be:

- Adequate staffing with Deputy Attorneys General and Public Defenders;
- Development and implementation of more specific guidelines for screening cases for arbitration and for the arbitration process;
- Adequate training for court staff, judges and police in handling domestic violence cases.

The court records of juveniles who have been involved in only one arbitration case and have no further criminal charges should be automatically expunged at age 18 when all conditions of arbitration have been fulfilled. Until such time as this can become the practice, we believe all juveniles and their parents/guardians should be notified automatically, at the time of arbitration, that they are to apply for expungement at age 18 and that such notification be part of the contract.

The state should provide diagnostic services, care, education and treatment to age 21, for youths and young adults who have mental or physical illness or who are developmentally delayed or are substance abusers, or are abused/neglected. Both inpatient and outpatient care should be provided. Facilities should be within a reasonable distance to enable families of patients to be included in treatment. Cost to the patient and family for such care should be based on ability to pay and in accordance with the state policies in similar situations. In addition, the state has the responsibility to provide care for abused/neglected youths. Such care might include group homes and a system for the recruitment, training and retention of foster parents.

There should be a strong education program statewide on women's and children's rights to raise the level of awareness and to convince the public, police, judges and court staff that domestic violence is a serious matter. We believe that all victims of family violence, including children, are entitled to equal protection under the law.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CHILD CARE

Support for state government involvement in encouraging, establishing, and/or supporting before and after school child care programs.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware believes that there is a need for before and after school child care programs. We support state government involvement in encouraging and/or establishing such programs with state funds, those funds to be used for pilot programs, start-up costs and/or ongoing support.

The League supports programs which would have sliding scale fees; have before and after-school hours; and include kindergarten-age children.

Before and after school child care programs need not be limited to public school buildings. We support the use of public school buses to provide transportation to other school and non-school sites. Cost of such transportation should be supported by user fees if possible and the other sites should be near the child's regular bus route.

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

LIBRARY SERVICES

Support of free and accessible public library services available to every Delawarean through centralized library systems (state or county), adequately funded and efficiently managed.

The League supports the following policies:

- Contract/independent libraries should be encouraged to become full county libraries.
- Statewide criteria should be established for delineating the geographic area served by each library.
- Each public library should have a basic up-to-date reference collection.
- Each public library should have access to comprehensive information services.
- Certain libraries should be designated the responsibility for building up subject collections as resources for all.
- Delaware Division of Libraries should maintain a union catalog of holdings of public libraries and other significant collections in the state.
- State and county governments should be responsible for funding library services.
- The state funding formula should be reviewed periodically.
- Functions and duties of the Division of Libraries as specified in the Delaware Code, should be adequately funded.

PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Support policies and funding for public school library media centers that promote their central role in providing equal opportunity for all children to achieve educational excellence.

Funding to provide library resources should be equally available to all students and staff in public schools in Delaware.

- Each public school library media center should be staffed by at least one certified library media specialist, with clerical assistance.
- Training in the use of new technology should be provided for all public school librarians and staff.
- Public school library media centers should have, or have access to, both print and non-print materials, e.g., books, magazines, data bases, Internet, a variety of media and electronic resources. Resources should be up-to-date, especially in areas where currency is essential, e.g., reference, science, etc.
- A specific percentage of state education funds should be dedicated to public school library media centers each year, preferably through a line item in the state budget.

Public school library media center collections should support each school's curricula.

Public school library media centers should be evaluated periodically.

There should be an ongoing maintenance program for all technology hardware for public school library media centers. Maintenance should not be part of the school library media specialist's duties.

Policies and practices of public school library media centers should adhere to the concept of intellectual freedom and the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*.

LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services:

- 1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.*
- 2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan and doctrinal disapproval.*
- 3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.*
- 4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.*
- 5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.*
- 6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use*

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Education - Continuing Study: A study of the public education system in Delaware with special focus on financing, charter schools, and transparency and accountability to citizens. (Adopted at convention June 2017; re-adopted at convention June 2019.)

FINANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Support for methods of financing public education that will promote equal opportunity for quality education and improve both the local district's and state's budgeting while maintaining a high level of local control.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports:

- Funding for special needs such as remediation, special education, gifted and vocational programs;
- A high level of local control to encourage flexibility and community involvement;
- A continuation of the concept of unit funding under which the state provides funds for an adequate education for each student;
- Uniform property assessment procedures and formulas throughout the state;
- Retention of optional local supplements because of their importance in promoting responsiveness of local boards to community needs;
- A state program to assure that local districts have similar ability to generate supplemental funds for education (for example, a fully funded equalization system such as Division III);
- Improved budgeting procedures for both the local districts and the state by a system that assures local districts a specific number of dollars in time for the next year's budget and accommodates decreasing and increasing enrollments.

Efforts to equalize tax burdens are desirable but are secondary to the League's primary goals of maintaining and improving educational quality in Delaware.

Note: Although the League recognizes that, in theory, pupil achievement could be a factor in financing public education (either to fund more heavily where achievement is low or to reward with extra funds where achievement is high), at this time we see no practical means of implementation.

HEALTH CARE

Health Care: *Continuing Study: A study of the financing and delivery of health care in Delaware.*

(Adopted revision at convention June 2019)

LWVDE also acts under the LWVUS health care position: "Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs."

(Adopted June 2015 at Convention)

END OF LIFE OPTIONS

Support for state laws that grant the option for a terminally ill person to request medical assistance from a relevant, licensed physician to end one's life and that such legislation should include safeguards against abuse for the dying and/or medical personnel. *(Position adopted at April 2019 state board meeting after concurrence with LWV Utah position.)*

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

Support for comprehensive needle exchange programs, which also offer education and referrals to appropriate services, as part of a public health effort to reduce the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware believes that the possible transmission of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases such as Hepatitis C via the sharing of contaminated needles puts uninfected addicts and their sexual partners at risk and is a public health problem which should be addressed by the State. We believe the strategy of exchanging clean needles for used needles as part of a structured program which includes education and referral services will result in more positive interactions with the addicted population. We also believe that while needle exchange programs may not change or reduce addiction rates, needle exchange programs will accomplish the primary goal of preventing further spread of blood-borne diseases.

We support programs which follow the National HIV Consortium/CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines:

“Well planned needle exchange programs provide the following services:

- Participants are issued an identification card and registered with the program.
- One clean needle/syringe is provided for one dirty needle/syringe
- Dirty needles are collected in proper container for safe disposal
- Service providers are accessible on a regular basis at specific locations
- Information is kept confidential and used only for public health research/education
- Security of the exchange sites and equipment is required
- Referrals are made to appropriate treatment and health & social service providers
- Appropriate levels of staff have expertise in working with injecting drug users
- Education about contracting HIV and other diseases through injection drug use/sexual contact is provided.”

We also support programs to decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases specifically targeted to youth and young adult

NATURAL RESOURCES

COASTAL ZONE

Support for Coastal Zone planning which considers the best possible outcome for people, the land and the coastal environment.

Specifically, the League supports:

- Protection of ecologically fragile estuaries and coastal areas;
- The prohibition against heavy industry in the Coastal Zone Act and belief that the term "heavy industry" should be more clearly defined;
- Clearly defining the boundaries of the Port of Wilmington.
- Requirement that industries situated in the Coastal Zone repair environmental damage for which they are responsible. Such damage should be impartially evaluated.

The League opposes:

- Construction of an oil or gas pipeline which terminates in the Coastal Zone;
- Construction of a superport.

DELAWARE'S CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Background

Scientific indicators show that increased greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations represent an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to mankind. Because of subsidence, Delaware is especially vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surges, saltwater intrusion, and flooding. In the 2014 Climate Framework for Delaware report, state agencies considered reducing greenhouse gas emissions from all sources by 30%, 40% or 50% by 2030, relative to 2008. They chose 30% without explaining why and set no goal beyond 2030. Several states have set a target of reducing GHG emissions by 80% by 2050.

Position on the Delaware Climate Action Plan for Reducing All Greenhouse Gases Emissions

The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports increasing the currently recommended 2030 goal for reducing Delaware's emissions of all greenhouse gases from 30% to a larger percentage, e.g., 40-45%, relative to 2008. A longer-term goal should be even higher, e.g. 80% by 2050, relative to 2008.

CARBON PRICING AND CLIMATE GOALS - Adopted Convention 2017

In 2014 at its National Convention, the League of Women Voters of United States (LWVUS) reached a position on carbon pricing through the adoption of a resolution stating that **the LWVUS supports a price on carbon, either by cap-and-trade or carbon tax or fee, as an effective way to decrease carbon emissions and reduce the negative effects of climate change.** About 75% of carbon emissions come from burning fossil fuels. By putting a price on carbon emissions that will increase in stages, the world can use the market place to reduce carbon emissions.

REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE

Background

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) involves pricing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from electricity generation in Delaware and eight other Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern states. It uses a system of cap

and trade, and now has an emissions cap (the total allowable carbon dioxide emissions from power plants in the RGGI region for the year). Currently, RGGI calls for decreasing the cap by 2.5%/year in 2015 through 2020, starting from 91 million short tons of CO₂ in 2014. Emissions in the states have decreased by nearly 50% since 2009, partly because of decreased demand and also because of investment of revenue in improving energy efficiency. There is no provision yet for decreases beyond 2020.

Position on the Cap on CO2 Emissions from Power Generation under the Regional Greenhouse Gas initiative (RGGI)

The League of Women Voters of Delaware:

Supports decreasing the RGGI cap by 5% per year, starting with the 2020 cap, from 2021 through 2030.

TRANSPORTATION AND CLIMATE INITIATIVE

Background

The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) is similar to RGGI in that it is a regional effort of Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern states to reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector, which is now the largest source of carbon emissions in Delaware and other RGGI states. TCI is currently discussing pricing carbon emissions from transportation fuels as a way to reduce emissions from the sector. Delaware currently has a gas tax of 23 cents per gallon – the lowest among the neighboring states of NJ, PA and MD.

Position on Pricing Emissions from the Transportation Sector

The League of Women Voters of Delaware:

Supports Delaware having an increasing price on carbon emissions from transportation fuels - especially on a regional basis - provided that some of that revenue is used:

- To ease the burden on low-income families, such as offering gas stamps, or returning part or all of the revenue as a rebate to adult residents on a per capita basis;
- To promote walkable/bikeable communities;
- To be used for refurbishing transportation infrastructure;
- To stimulate research and innovation;
- To encourage vehicle energy efficiency;
- To provide additional electrical charging stations for hybrid and all-electric vehicles.
- To develop economic opportunities and create jobs.

ENERGY

The League of Women Voters of Delaware adopted an energy study at its convention on 5/2/2007. It chose to study an energy plan for Delaware minimizing global warming and climate change. The study revealed that the LWVD positions on energy were generally covered by LWVUS energy positions and only two new areas were not covered. Those two areas were Renewable Portfolio Standards and Transmission and Distribution. Positions for these two new areas were reached by consensus and adopted at the LWVD Board meeting on July 22, 2010.

RENEWABLE PORTFOLIO STANDARDS

Background

Renewable energy portfolio standard (RPS) policies are legal mandates that require utilities to own or acquire renewable energy or renewable energy certificates to account for a certain percentage of their retail electricity sales, or a certain amount of generating capacity, within a specified timeframe. RPS policies are widely considered to be among the most important of those that lead to increased renewable energy capacity.

RPS policies are determined by individual states; there is no federal policy. Delaware's RPS were established by the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards Act, which provides that utilities procure a yearly increasing percentage of their electricity from renewable energy resources, leading up to 25% by 2025. However, the Act applies only to private utilities in Delaware - not to co-ops or municipalities.

Delaware would be in line with many other states by increasing its future goals. At the consensus meetings, the members chose 35% or higher renewable energy resources for 2035 and 50% or higher for 2050.

Renewable Energy Portfolio

The League of Women Voters of Delaware:

1. Supports an increase in the percentage of renewable energy sources in Delaware's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) provided that they:
 - have minimum environmental impact;
 - use the best current technology as measured by reliability, proven effectiveness, and being state-of-the-art;
 - have long range cost effectiveness including all net costs such as health and environmental costs, state and federal subsidies, and price stability.
2. Supports measures ensuring that total electricity sales in Delaware be required to meet the RPS.
3. Supports aggressive increases, by increments, of the percentage goals of renewable energy resources of electricity sold in Delaware beyond the goal of 25% renewable energy resources by 2025, with increased goals for 2035 and 2050.

Background Material on Transmission and Distribution:

The transmission system (the grid) that supplies wholesale electricity to Delaware's three distribution facilities: Delmarva Power, Delaware Municipal Electric Corp. (DEMEC), and Delaware Electric Cooperative (DEC) is old and inadequate and was designed to bring electricity from Midwest fossil-fuel-fired power plants to Delaware, a net importer of electricity. In recent years, transmission enhancement planning--the Mid-Atlantic Power Pathway (MAPP)--was without innovation; and the approved plans were put on hold.

A study released in 2010 by the National Renewable Energy Lab shows that connected East Coast off-shore wind generation can provide 20% - 30% of the U.S. energy needs if appropriate system modifications and structural changes are made to the grid. If Delaware is to fully develop its renewable resources, primarily offshore wind and solar/photovoltaics, a new approach to transmission planning and grid enhancement will be necessary.

Transmission and Distribution

The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports:

1. Maximizing the development and delivery of renewable energy to Delaware when designing and developing new transmission plans for the region.
2. In addition to delivering reliable, adequate electric service to Delaware, the key factors to be considered in making a decision on any transmission plan/transmission enhancements are:
 - Degree of environmental impact;
 - Degree of utilization of the transmission for renewable resource power vs. fossil-fuel generated power;
 - True cost, including all cost-externalities;
 - Safety and security of the grid.

ENERGY/CLIMATE CHANGE

The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports an aggressive and comprehensive energy use/climate change plan for Delaware. Some key points that should be included:

- Accelerate bringing new green businesses, jobs and industries to Delaware, and investigate emerging energy technologies.
- Set targets and a timetable for reducing Delaware's total greenhouse gas emissions.
- Plan for extensive adaptation measures at all levels of government for climate change impacts that cannot be avoided---especially sea level rise.
- Support public education and outreach; expand renewable energy and climate change in Delaware curriculum standards.
- As Delaware calculates energy costs, full life cycle analyses* with all externalities** must be included.
- Social and economic justice must be considered in implementing energy and climate change policy.

*Life cycle analysis is a technique to assess environmental impacts associated with all the stages of a product's life from cradle-to-grave (i.e., from raw material extraction through materials processing, manufacture, distribution, use repair and maintenance, and disposal or recycling).

**Energy externalities are external costs and benefits--health, environmental, security, and infrastructure--associated with the production, distribution, and consumption of energy that are not, or may not be fully incorporated into the market price.

LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION

LAND USE PLANNING - Support of the regulation of growth and optimum use of land through comprehensive planning policy. Monitoring of land use policies and procedures and their relationship to human needs, population trends, transportation planning, and ecological and socioeconomic factors. Encouragement of continuing cooperation among governmental agencies.

Support for:

A comprehensive planning policy which includes:

- Necessary implementing ordinances and their enforcement.
- Impact fees on new development.
- Transit as an important factor in controlling development.
- The realized interconnectedness between land use and transportation planning.

- Provision for heterogeneous communities which include different types of housing, commerce, light industry and/or community facilities.
- Strict control of development in flood plain areas.
- Preservation of farmland, open space, and natural areas, especially in stream areas.
- Coordination among agencies and various levels of government involved in land use.
- Provisions for informed and active participation of citizens in governmental planning process.
- Favorable tax treatment for farm and non-farm open land as part of a comprehensive policy for preserving open land.
 - A roll-back in taxes and/or other tax measures to recover lost public revenue should be considered when open land is rezoned, subdivided or sold for development.

FARMLAND AND CRITICAL LAND AREAS

In the late 1970's, the League of Women Voters of Delaware studied certain land use issues from a purely state perspective. In April 1977, a position was adopted in support of a farmland preservation program as a part of a state land use policy which balances human needs and environmental quality.

Support of a farmland preservation program.

A farmland preservation program should:

- Protect farms intact with all related land, whether or not said land had actually been cultivated.
- Have voluntary entry, if possible, with benefits and restrictions recognized by owner;
- Include time limits and significant tax penalties for withdrawal and development of land;
- Include size, productivity and location as eligibility factors;
- Be aimed at preserving land which is a natural resource;
- Include procedures for reevaluation and flexibility to meet future needs;
- Include fair compensation if entry is mandatory.

As a part of the state study (above), and again with consideration for human needs and environmental quality, the following position was adopted in January 1978.

Support for the preservation and/or protection of certain critical areas and coordination among all levels of government.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware specifically believes that recognition should be given to the importance of:

- Floodplain and erosion and sedimentation control;
- Protection for aquifer recharge areas;
- Natural areas preservation;
- Increased coordination in siting major facilities.

TRANSPORTATION

Although the League of Women Voters of Delaware can act on various transportation issues based on national environmental and social policy positions a state transportation position was adopted by Convention, 2001. This position was merged with a previous state position directed mainly to transportation related state Authorities and agencies. The wording of the merged positions was approved by the LWVDE State Board in November 2001.

Support a balanced, intermodal transportation system interconnected with land use and based on interagency and inter-jurisdictional coordination.

The League supports:

- A multi-modal/interconnected transportation system, including but not limited to: highways, transit, rail, bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways.
- A transportation system that is consistent with protection of natural resources, including water quality and supply, and air quality.
- A transportation system consistent with conservation of energy resources.
- Full coordination between transportation-related authorities and agencies and regional, state and local planning agencies with an emphasis on the interconnection between land use and transportation.
- Some measure of public control exerted on transportation-related agencies and authorities in the State of Delaware, regardless of whether they are publicly or privately-financed. Minimum controls should include:
 - A requirement to comply with local, state and regional comprehensive transportation plans and adopted land use plans.
 - Public hearings on projects held early in the planning stage.
 - Requirements for public hearings and Environmental Impact Statements on all projects when required.
 - Statistical data, reports and studies done by, for and about transportation-related authorities and agencies available to the public as well as the government.
 - Public education about transportation issues and policy based on workshops, forums, etc.
 - Timely participation by the public in decision-making.

The Land Use/Transportation Interface

The League of Women Voters of Delaware supports reducing transportation-generated greenhouse gas emissions by wiser land use planning and by enhancing public transit options. Some key points that should be included:

1. Direct development towards growth zones, except for environmentally sensitive areas within those growth zones; assure availability of infrastructure, services and walkability before developing.
2. Build compact, or dense, development within established development areas in which pedestrians can safely and conveniently access services.
3. Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
4. Modify Delaware's paratransit fee schedule to establish separate classifications for ADA* and non-ADA** service. Reform the system to establish fairer pricing for non-ADA paratransit use. Tighten eligibility requirements for all paratransit use in situations where the state has discretion.
5. Establish a dedicated funding stream for public transit; explore a variety of funding sources.

*ADA refers to the Americans for Disabilities Act requirement that paratransit service be provided within a 3/4 mile radius of all fixed-route bus service routes. Both origins and destinations must be within the required radius.

**Non-ADA refers to paratransit trips which either originate or end outside the 3/4-mile radius.