



The League of Women Voters of Delaware Supports the Work A Day, Earn a Pay Public Works Program (SB 9)

The LWVUS has been supporting a full employment policy --- the concept of assuring a job for all those able and seeking to work since at least 1978. LWVUS policy states: "Persons...whose earnings are inadequate... have the right to an income...adequate to meet basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care."

Based on that policy and history, the League of Women Voters of Delaware supports the Work a Day, Earn a Pay public works program. This program provides temporary, entry-level employment in areas such as public works projects, litter control, river, stream and park cleanup projects, and housing renovation and improvement projects, aimed at unemployed, at-risk, and disadvantaged individuals with barriers to employment opportunities.

We would like to emphasize the need for some of these funds to go to non-profit organizations that will hire former-inmates from Delaware prisons. They have some of the most significant barriers to employment of any category of the unemployed. For example, they are prohibited from even applying for most jobs that require a license, and many employers won't even interview a prospective employee who has a record. The inability of many former inmates to get a job contributes to our high rate of recidivism, so this program could help address that issue as well.

We also applaud the option for funds to apply to housing renovation and improvement. These could help address the serious affordability issues facing low income families. According to the publication *Who Can Afford to Live in Delaware?*, for every 100 extremely low-income households (at or below 30% of Adjusted Median Income) in our state, there are only 32 units of affordable housing available. There is an immediate need for 16,820 affordable housing units to fill the state deficit for extremely low income Delaware households.¹ Renovation of existing housing stock would be a great way for those funds to be spent.

We are particularly pleased to see that this program would be able to use up to \$2 million in annual funding for three years from the State Strategic Fund administered by the Delaware Economic Development Office's Council on Development Finance. It is our opinion that this use of available resources in the State Strategic Fund would be a much better use of those dollars than some of the approaches that have been implemented in recent years.

The League of Women Voters of Delaware urges speedy passage of SB 9.

¹ <http://housingforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/WhoCanAfford2016.pdf>