



WHERE WE STAND

2023–2025 PROGRAM

ABRIDGED VERSION

LWVIL President: Becky Simon

Edited by: Letina Brady Pettis, Sarah Bury, Kathy Cortez, Jacquelyn Casazza, Ann Courter, Laura Davis, Lorri Grainawi, Rosemary Heilemann, Carla Hillman, Claudia Jackson, Bill Koehl, Barbara Laimins, Donna Limper, Jim McGrath, Margaret O'Hara, and Kim Reed.

Copyright 2023

The League of Women Voters of Illinois
332 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 634
Chicago, IL 60604

312-939-5935
issues@lwwil.org
www.lwwil.org

Foreword

Where We Stand is the platform of the League of Women Voters of Illinois. It is a companion to *Impact on Issues*, the League of Women Voters of the United States' program book. Taken together, these publications and the *League Principles* form the basis for all action taken by Illinois Leagues on state and national issues.

Program

Where We Stand, covering the LWWIL state positions adopted at the 2023 Convention, is designed to help local Leagues use the state program effectively. The material is organized into four topic sections: Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy, corresponding to the order they appear in *Impact on Issues*. Each section begins with a summary of relevant LWWUS positions and major action taken by Illinois Leagues under those positions. The LWWIL positions are then listed in full, followed by a brief historical background and recent action taken, with references to the interrelationship between positions.

Procedures For Taking Action

Local Leagues are encouraged to apply national and state positions to local and/or regional issues. Before taking action on national issues, local Leagues must consult with the LWWIL Issues and Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs at issues@lwwil.org and the national League. Before taking action on statewide issues, local Leagues must consult with the LWWIL Issues and Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs. On regional issues, local Leagues must consult with all affected Leagues. See "Action Guidelines for Local Leagues" for consultation information.

Purpose

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots, multi-issue organization. Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policies of the League, male or female, may become a member of the League. The League's purposes are:

- To establish positions on public policy through member participation and agreement.
- To take concerted actions that secure policies consistent with League positions.
- To enhance citizen participation in federal, state and local government decisions.
- To increase citizen participation in the election process.

League Principles

The League of Women Voters Believes

- In representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- That cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.
- The League of Women Voters of Illinois is committed to the principle that amendments to the federal Constitution should require only a simple majority rather than a 3/5 majority for ratification in Illinois. The federal ratification process requires approval by 2/3 of both houses of Congress and approval by 3/4 of the state legislatures for an amendment to be ratified. We agree that these stringent requirements provide sufficient protection for our Constitution. This interpretation would apply only to the federal Constitution.

Action Under Principles

The *Principles* are "concepts of government" to which the League subscribes. According to the LWVUS Bylaws, they serve as authorization for adoption of national, state and local positions and as a basis for taking action at the national, state and local levels. However, because the *Principles* are broad in scope, action based on *Principles* alone should be undertaken with caution. It is suggested that any action on the *Principles* be taken in conjunction with present League positions to which they apply and on which member agreement and understanding are known to exist.

Program Pillars For 2023–25 Advocacy

The following pillars are aimed at working toward a better democracy:

Voting Rights and Election Processes

The LWV of Illinois works to ensure free, fair and accessible elections, promote equitable voter access, protect voting by mail, voter registration, election security, and to standardize best practices and processes across election authorities. The LWV of Illinois supports initiatives which conform to our positions regarding campaign finance and ethics reform, redistricting, and abolishing the electoral college.

Environment/Climate Crisis

The LWV of Illinois advocates for policies to mitigate climate change and support the equitable and sustainable adaptation to the impacts of climate change, including: promoting renewable energy sources, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and reducing waste. The LWV of Illinois works for environmental justice and policies that ensure an equitable distribution of environmental risks and benefits across all communities. In addition, we advocate for the protection of the air, land, and water, to promote healthy ecosystems, biodiversity and a clean and healthful environment.

Equitably Meeting Basic Human Needs

The LWV of Illinois advocates for policies that equitably meet basic human needs for all residents, to include: health care, including reproductive health and behavioral health, economic support, housing, education, safety, freedom from violence, and justice. To support these initiatives, the LWV of Illinois advocates for a state revenue system that is equitable, progressive, stable, responsive, and simple.

Table of Contents

Representative Government

Constitutional Implementation and Amendments

County Government Structure

Consolidation of Governmental Units and Sharing of Major Governmental Services

State Election Laws

Registration and Elections

State Board of Elections

Election Systems Criteria

Term Limits

State Redistricting

Natural Resources

Land Use

Comprehensive Land Use Policy

Development Impact Fees

Large-Scale Livestock Facilities

Pesticides

Water-Great Lakes Ecosystem

Social Policy

Children's Services

Criminal Justice

Death Penalty Abolition

Gun Violence Prevention

Handgun Control

Assault Weapons Control

Immigration

Income Assistance

Low and Moderate Income Housing

Mental Health

Schools

School Quality

School Finance

Higher Education Funding

[Charter Schools](#)

[State Fiscal Policies](#)

[Gambling](#)

[Action Guidelines For Local Leagues](#)

[Action at the Local Level](#)

[Action at the Regional Level](#)

[Action at the State Level](#)

[Action at the National Level](#)

Representative Government

Constitutional Implementation and Amendments

1977, 1980, 1981, 1988, 1998 and 2003

LWVIL supports:

- Implementation of the constitutional mandate to the legislature to provide an orderly transfer process when units of government are dissolved or their structure or boundaries are changed.
- An appointed State Board of Education with authority to name the state superintendent of education.
- Flexible annual sessions of the legislature.
- A revenue article with as little restrictive detail as possible, and which does not contain limitations on tax rates or bonding power and does not prohibit any particular tax.
- A graduated income tax.
- Constitutional initiative for the legislative article.
- Compulsory referendum for constitutional amendments.
- Merit selection of judges, with provision for public financing at Supreme and Appellate Court levels.
- Recall of elected judges.

The League supports indirect statutory and constitutional initiative, a process by which citizens can petition for enactment of a law or the passage of a constitutional amendment by the legislature. If the legislature fails to act within a specified time, the proposed law or amendment is placed on the ballot at the next election. (This is in contrast to direct statutory and constitutional initiatives that bypass the legislature. After petitions have received the required number of signatures and are deemed valid, the question is placed on the ballot.)

In addition, the Illinois League opposes constitutional amendments to provide for optional, compulsory or advisory referenda for statutes initiated by the legislature. The League supports statutory provisions requiring that those who pass and sign petitions be registered voters, and opposes requiring a representative geographical distribution of signers or petitions. (Note: In 1999, the US Supreme Court invalidated Colorado's requirement that referenda circulators be registered voters. In response to these rulings, the Illinois General Assembly changed the Illinois Election Code in 2001. Illinois law now conforms to the Federal Constitutional voting requirements that circulators be at least 18 years old and a United States citizen. (This change in the Election Code essentially voids the LWVIL position that petition passers and signers be registered voters.)

The League supports merit selection as the ideal method to appoint judges to the courts in Illinois. Since 2003, in light of a longtime League goal of limiting political influence in the selection of judges, the escalating cost of judicial races and slow progress towards the goals of merit selection, the League also has advocated working for public financing of judicial elections at the Supreme Court and Appellate Court levels.

County Government Structure

1991

- Citizens in each county should have the power to initiate change in the structure of county government. Structure refers to form of government; number of county board members; single

member, at-large or multimember districts or a combination thereof; county board chairman elected at-large or by peers; or elected county executive.

- Signature requirements for the petition process for citizen-initiated change in the structure of county government must be reasonable. The number of signatures needed should be a percentage of the actual voters in a recent jurisdiction-wide election rather than a percentage of the registered voters in the jurisdiction. Citizens who have successfully completed the initiative process should be assured of ballot access.
- The Illinois County Executive Act should provide a clear separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. The Act should provide easily understood referendum language for non-home rule counties voting to adopt the county executive form of government.
- County legislative bodies should have the right to require independently elected county officials to adhere to the same personnel and procurement systems as appointed county department heads.

Consolidation of Governmental Units and Sharing of Major Governmental Services

2015

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports the efficient and effective operation of government. Consolidation of governmental units and the sharing of major governmental services may be a way of promoting the efficient and effective operation of government. In achieving this goal, the League supports a cooperative and transparent process, in which citizens have sufficient and timely information with which to make informed decisions about proposed actions, and well-defined channels for citizen input and review. Administrative and fiscal efficiency should be included in the criteria by which local governments consider whether to consolidate or share major services.

The League supports a system of state-funded grants to local governments to study the feasibility of the consolidation of governmental units or sharing of governmental services.

In determining whether to support a consolidation/ shared services proposal at the local level, as a way of making government more efficient and effective, local Leagues must consider both the adequacy of the process and the likely effects of the proposal's implementation.

In determining whether to support a consolidation/ shared services proposal as a way of making government more efficient and effective, local Leagues should apply the following criteria. While it is not necessary that each standard be met, the League recognizes that these standards represent potential benefits of consolidation, leading to more efficient and effective government:

- Will the proposal result in projected cost savings and a positive effect on taxes over the long term;
- Will the proposal either result in an increased quality and/or efficiency of services or, at a minimum, maintain services at existing levels;
- Will the proposal fairly address disparities in employee contracts;
- Will the proposal result in increased social and economic justice;
- Will the proposal result in a reduction in the number of governmental entities?

As used in this position, consolidation refers to both the process of consolidation and the process of dissolution.

State Election Laws

Registration and Elections

1972-1977, revised 1999

The League of Women Voters supports uniformity of election laws and procedures throughout the state. Registration and voting methods should ensure the integrity of the election system, maximize voters' unencumbered access to the ballot, preserve the secrecy of the ballot and ensure accurate and timely vote tabulation. Citizens should have the right to file complaints and writs of mandamus to force compliance with election laws.

The League opposes any legislation that would require a declaration of party at the time of registration or at any time prior to a primary election. A voter's selection of a party's ballot in one primary should not be binding beyond that election.

Registration

A combined in-person digital, and mail registration system should be maintained. Citizens with more than one residence should have the option of choosing which residence will be the primary residence for registration. The length of residency required to register to vote should be the minimum needed to allow adequate time for verification and publication of voter lists. Registration procedures should include safeguards against fraud.

Elections

The League supports an efficient, practical and regular election schedule. At each polling place there should be election judges from more than one of the major political parties. The League supports mandatory training and periodic retraining of all election judges. In tabulating votes, any mark or other indication that clearly shows the intent of the voter should be counted. Additional election officials for tallying ballots should be used when conditions necessitate.

State Board of Elections

1971, revised 1999

The League of Women Voters supports a state board of elections. Such agency should ensure that election laws are applied uniformly and properly throughout the state. The state board of elections should supervise and coordinate: voter registration; candidate filing, reporting, and certification; and the nomination and election processes.

Organization

Members of the state board of elections should be appointed to staggered terms by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. No political party should constitute a majority of the board and the board's size should ensure that all parts of the state are represented. A means for resolving tie votes should be utilized. The League is not opposed to compensation beyond expenses, reflecting the scope of the job.

Responsibilities

The state board of elections should interpret and compel compliance with the election laws and should have the power to receive complaints, conduct investigations, issue subpoenas, hold hearings, impose penalties and pursue appropriate enforcement action through the courts. The board should appoint an administrative director to oversee the day-to-day operations of the agency and may delegate authority below the state level, as appropriate. To ensure understanding and compliance with election laws and procedures, the board should 1) provide training for registration and election officials and 2) prepare and disseminate information to educate citizens and candidates.

The board should work for codification of election laws and should continually study and recommend improvements in election laws and procedures. It should make annual reports to the General Assembly, the governor and the public.

Election Systems Criteria

2002

The League believes that a good election system must meet the following two criteria:

1. An election system should provide stability and continuity of governance by assuring smooth transitions following elections and should produce a legislature that addresses the problems of society effectively and in a timely manner.
2. An election system should also be resistant to both outright fraud and forms of political manipulation, such as those involving nominating processes and procedures, gerrymandering, or financing of campaigns.

The League believes these additional criteria should also be considered when judging an elections system. A system should:

- Encourage close links between legislators and their constituents so as to promote citizen participation in government and help to assure accountability.
- Be easy to use and to administer. Citizens should be able to cast their votes with ease and to understand the election results without difficulty. Complicated voting procedures that discourage voter participation and create confusion over voting results should be avoided. Consideration should be given to the administrative costs of conducting elections.
- Produce a legislature that fairly and accurately reflects the views found among the public, enabling voters to be confident that their voices will be heard.
- Encourage high-quality political campaigns by instituting procedures that promote discussion of issues and discourage mudslinging and dirty tricks.
- Encourage high voter turnout, recognizing that while administrative matters, such as barriers to registration, can affect turnout, the election system itself can also affect it.

Term Limits

1992, 1999

The League opposes constitutional or statutory term limitations for members of the General Assembly based on the League's support for accountability, representativeness, and effective performance and for a dynamic balance of power between the legislative and the executive branches.

State Redistricting

1993

The League supports a redistricting process which is:

- timely and orderly and which includes a formal announced timetable,
- makes information and related data available to all who wish to participate in the process,
- offers ample opportunities for expert testimony and public reaction to the proposed maps,
- encourages compromise among partisan representatives,
- avoids a partisan stalemate, and
- results in maps which offer the voters a choice of candidates for election.

The League supports the following criteria for drawing state legislative districts:

1. Population equity: The average deviation among all districts in each house shall not exceed a range of 1 percent, with no more than a 5 percent variance between the most populated and the least populated districts. Districts shall be based on current census statistics.

2. All districts shall be drawn in compliance with the United States Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent amendments.
3. Compact and contiguous: All districts shall be compact, with the smallest perimeter possible, and contiguous, adjacent to one another with more than a single point of contiguity. Areas connected only at points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.
4. Boundaries:
 - a. The number of counties, towns and cities divided among more than one district shall be as small as possible.
 - b. Districts shall follow existing political boundaries (i.e., county, municipal, ward lines), as far as possible.
 - c. No city block shall be subdivided, since a city block is the smallest parcel for which census data are available.
 - d. Where possible, district lines shall follow permanent and easily recognized features, such as toll ways, expressways, highways, streets, rivers, and clear geographical features, and when practical, shall coincide with census tract boundaries.
5. No district shall be drawn with the intent to favor a political party or incumbent legislator or congressman.
6. Each state senatorial district shall consist of two entire house districts as currently stipulated in the state constitution. Ideally each state senatorial district shall be entirely within a single U.S. Congressional district.

These criteria may be applied to any redistricting process.

(Also see LWVUS Apportionment and Redistricting Positions. LWVUS adopted a new Redistricting Position in 2016 which includes additional guidelines for the redistricting process and updated standards for drawing districts including vesting the responsibility for redistricting in an independent commission. This position should be used along with the LWVIL position in evaluating redistricting proposals.)

Natural Resources

Land Use

Comprehensive Land Use Policy

1972, 1973, 1974

Revised in 1975, 1977, 1997, and 1999

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports:

- Development of a comprehensive land use policy for Illinois that provides for orderly growth while preserving the environment, conservation of natural resources, preservation of open space and protection of prime agricultural land from lesser uses and intensive development.
- The League believes the State should establish the long-range goals of a comprehensive land use policy and that the State should identify, plan for, and have the final authority over all key and critical areas in the state. The State should develop standards and broad guidelines for land use, but local governments should make purely local decisions. The State should assist local governments with professional help and should encourage and facilitate intergovernmental cooperation.
- A state agency with adequate staff and funding should be responsible for forming and implementing land use decisions. Opportunities for citizen participation should be available at every stage of land use planning.

- Conservation of natural resources must be the established policy of the state, and citizens should be made aware of the role they can play in conservation. Comprehensive land use planning and citizen education are the major thrusts to harmonize growth and the preservation of resources.
- The League supports regional planning and continuous mandatory funding for regional planning agencies from local, state and federal resources (see also LWVUS Natural Resources position).

Development Impact Fees

1997

The League supports legislation at the state level regarding development impact fees. It is appropriate for such legislation to address fees for capital expenditures for schools, libraries, parks/open space, transportation, utilities and emergency services.

Such legislation should be enabling only, and not directive. Only municipalities and counties should have the authority to assess development impact fees, and state guidelines should be adaptable to home rule and non-home rule communities. The test for validity of impact fees in Illinois should be “rational nexus” and not “specifically and uniquely attributable.”

Enabling legislation should strive to effect some standardization of impact fee programs statewide, with flexibility for each to be designed to meet local needs.

Large-Scale Livestock Facilities

1999

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports strict regulations of large-scale livestock facilities on the state, regional and/or county levels to include:

1. Appropriate statewide environmental controls:
 - a. implement siting criteria to protect water sensitive areas;
 - b. require that all large-scale livestock facilities management plans be submitted to the appropriate agency and be available to the public;
 - c. require that rates of the most potentially damaging components (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, heavy metals) be used as parameters for livestock waste application on crops to minimize land and water pollution;
 - d. require set back distances from bodies of water, wells for human consumption and residences necessary to protect public health;
 - e. require owners to provide bonding, insurance indemnity funds or other financial assurances to ensure that the owners, not the taxpayers, pay for the cost of cleanups from spills or closing of facilities;
 - f. require inspections more frequently than once per year to ensure compliance with environmental standards and practices;
 - g. extend current rules for lagoons to all types of waste handling facilities;
 - h. not distinguish between farm and non-farm residences in setback distances from facilities.
2. Public hearing to give notice of the intention to site a facility, determine compliance with state, regional and/or local criteria, and determine compliance with state environmental criteria.
3. Regional and/or county control of siting.

Pesticides

1991

- The League supports the reduction of exposure to all pesticides and urges the use of non-toxic alternatives.

- Governmental bodies should encourage a reduction in pesticide use through the promotion of management programs such as integrated pest management, sustainable agriculture and non-toxic control techniques.

Water-Great Lakes Ecosystem

2013

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

I. Protective Measures

To achieve protection and improvement of this valuable, international resource, the League of Women Voters of Illinois supports efforts to:

- Limit uses of "fragile," historical, cultural and scenic shoreline areas.
- Preserve wild and pristine areas within the watershed, with no new development in these special habitats without adherence to strict criteria as prescribed by federal, state, or local governments.
- Provide for appropriate recreational opportunities in and public access to sensitive areas without destruction or harm to the ecosystem.
- Protect the quality of the air and waters of the ecosystem by strict adherence to agricultural, industrial, residential, environmental, and commercial zoning regulations that prohibit the introduction of toxic or polluting discharges or detrimental land use techniques within the Basin.
- Protect the remaining dune formations. Enforce strict regulations of sand dune mining or development on the dunes.
- Strengthen upstream land management to eliminate sources of siltation and pollution.
- Control the invasion and spread of non-native aquatic and terrestrial nuisance species.

II. Threats to the Ecosystem

The League of Women Voters of Illinois opposes the following activities as they can lead to the degradation of the special natural resources of the Great Lakes Ecosystem: • Inefficient or excessive water uses. Proposals for new or increased withdrawals within the Basin, e.g. for agricultural or municipal uses, should be carefully evaluated before being permitted. Withdrawals should be regularly monitored for potential or actual damage to the ecosystem.

- Destruction of marshes and other wetlands throughout the watershed. Mitigation should be accepted only as a last resort. Mitigation proposals should be rigorously evaluated and projects should be strictly monitored to assure no net loss to the ecosystem.
- New or increased diversions or transfers by any means of Great Lakes waters and adjacent ground waters to a place outside the Basin. Projects already in place should be carefully monitored and restricted if there is evidence of damage to the ecosystem.
- Dredging and filling of river inlets, harbors, lakes or wetlands except for tightly- controlled, non-degrading and non-repetitive activities.
- Discharge to air or water of toxic pollutants and other material from industrial, agricultural, residential or commercial operations that may damage the ecosystem in violation of laws and ordinances.

III. Public Participation

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports informed and responsible action on behalf of the preservation of the Great Lakes Ecosystem. Relevant information should be readily available to the public. Opportunities for public input should be timely, accessible, convenient and well advertised.

IV. Role of Government

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports:

- Coordination of functions among various governmental agencies charged with protecting the Great Lakes and elimination of unnecessary overlap.
- Use of area-wide coordinated management plans and techniques in the solving of Great Lakes Ecosystem problems.
- Participation by all affected governments in the Basin in review and decision- making on Great Lakes agreements and projects, facilitated in open meetings and hearings.
- Strengthening of existing mechanisms for intergovernmental discussions and decision-making.
- Separation of responsibility for submitting recommendations for governmental projects from issuing permits for such projects.
- Monitoring and enforcement of treaties, ordinances, laws and master plans.

V. Research Priorities

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes that research on Great Lakes issues should focus on:

- Effective, non-toxic control and removal of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species.
- Restoration of health to the overall resource.
- Survival of native aquatic and terrestrial species and their nutrient sources.
- Continual testing of Great Lakes water quality for impact from the following: pesticides and fertilizers, resistant bacteria, persistent pharmaceuticals and other chemicals.
- Evaluation of water accountability systems, groundwater monitoring and water use planning and conservation efforts throughout the Basin.

Social Policy

Children's Services

1967, 1972, 1977, revised 1996

The League believes that the State should play the leading role in meeting the needs of children and their families. This responsibility applies across systems of care regardless of age or legal status of the children.

Resources

The League supports a continuum of quality services that strengthens and preserves families and fosters healthy growth and development of children.

Family-focused, community-based systems of care that emphasize prevention and early intervention should have high priority. The supply of affordable, quality child care should be expanded, with priority given to those in greatest economic need. For children whose needs cannot be met at home, foster homes, group homes, small residential treatment and correctional facilities should be available. Transitional and aftercare programs are essential parts of the continuum of care. Regardless of where children are being served, education is essential.

Shelter care and other services suited to their needs should be available to children whose cases are pending. Detention should be reserved for delinquent children who meet professional screening criteria and provided separately from adult programs.

The League supports a juvenile court system that provides opportunities for effective protection, treatment and rehabilitation; meets the individual needs of children and their families; and protects the rights of all affected parties. The court's effectiveness depends on several factors: judicial leadership, personnel with special training in juvenile matters, support services that allow judges to make informed decisions, probation services responsive to the special needs of children, courtroom procedures that reduce unnecessary delays, a wide range of available interventions, and an effective citizen presence. The League opposes the automatic transfer of children to the criminal court and believes that a juvenile court judge should

determine whether a case is considered in the juvenile court or the criminal court. The League opposes the death penalty for offenses committed by children.

Administration

The State should have the primary role in funding to ensure that quality services are equitably available to children and families throughout the state. In order to protect funding and visibility, the child welfare agency should be separate from other human service agencies. The Governor's office should provide leadership to ensure that state agencies do the following:

- Communicate and cooperate with each other to provide coordinated services, clear guidelines for responsibility and information to the public about the availability of services
- Develop long range plans which include coordination of local service delivery, provide for citizen input and review, and encourage local initiatives
- Establish family-focused, community-based systems of care
- Set and enforce program and personnel standards consistent with national accreditation standards
- Encourage the recruitment, retention and training of sufficient numbers of qualified staff at all levels
- Ensure that agencies are directed and staffed by qualified personnel regardless of political affiliation
- Evaluate programs and search for new methods to improve services

Criminal Justice

1972, 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1989, revised 1995, 2021

The League has positions on the following aspects of criminal justice.

Investing In Communities To Reduce Crime And Violence

To reduce crime and violence, there should be community-supported and comprehensive investment in underserved and/or impoverished communities.

Bias In The Criminal Justice System

In order to work toward the goal of equal treatment under the law, ongoing evidence-based training for individuals working in the criminal justice system is necessary to check biased behavior.

Equitable And Appropriate Treatment Of People In The Criminal Justice System

In order to assure equitable and appropriate treatment of people, the criminal justice system needs to consider their gender, age, health, race, ethnicity, disabilities, and cognitive development.

Data Collection And Transparency

Efficient data collection, analysis, data sharing among appropriate agencies, and transparency are critical in an impartial and unbiased criminal justice system.

Policing

Policing should protect and promote the dignity of all. Building trust and nurturing legitimacy on both sides of the police/citizen divide is foundational to positive relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Police recruits should be hired based on their ability and willingness to build positive relationships with diverse members of the community.

Law enforcement agencies should work with community organizations (e.g. schools, social services, churches, and businesses) to develop policies and strategies to reduce crime and promote public safety. It is desirable for police to use alternatives to arrest whenever possible.

Law enforcement should adopt model policies and best practices for current technology-based community engagement that increases community trust and access.

Quality training and education should begin with recruits and should be ongoing throughout officers' careers. Police should be licensed.

The mental and physical health and safety of law enforcement officers is critical not only for the officers, their colleagues, and their agencies but also for public safety.

Jail Standards

The League supports the development and enforcement of standards for local jails and detention facilities. The Illinois Department of Corrections is an appropriate agency to carry out this function.

Pre-Trial Procedures

The League supports the elimination of cash bond. Post-arrest detention should only be considered if the defendant is a danger to the community or is a flight risk. When deciding conditions of pretrial release for a defendant, the judge should consider the results of an unbiased risk assessment.

Electronic monitoring may be used if it does not prohibit a defendant from carrying out responsibilities such as working, attending school, seeking medical help, or meeting family needs. Pre-trial service providers should remind defendants of court appearances. A private attorney or public defender should be present for all defendants at all hearings.

Courtroom Procedures and Access

The League supports improvements in courtroom procedures that serve to minimize confusion and delay and increase fairness and efficiency. Trials should be prompt, with a limit on the time the accused can be held in jail prior to trial. Sufficient numbers of well-paid and well-trained judges, assistant state's attorneys, public defenders and other court personnel are essential. Uniform standards should be used for appointing public defenders. Barriers to and within the courthouse and courtrooms should be eliminated whenever possible.

Sentencing Laws and Procedures

- The League believes that judges should retain the discretion to choose between imprisonment and probation for most offenses and opposes the proliferation of non probationable offenses.
- The League believes that there should be strict penalties and enforcement for all crimes committed with a handgun or an assault weapon (see LWVIL Gun Violence Prevention position).
- The League supports reduction in time served as an incentive for good conduct by those who are incarcerated. Such credits should be incorporated into the sentencing structure and should not be revoked without due process.
- The League believes that a body, free from political influence, should make recommendations that promote certainty and fairness in sentencing in order to provide greater uniformity and monitor the fiscal impact and effect on prison populations.
- Evidence-based practices and best practices should guide sentencing laws and prosecutorial decision-making.
- Proposed sentencing laws should be evaluated for potential discrimination.
- There should be collaboration among stakeholders so that sentencing outcomes are just and fair.
- Legislation that reduces penalties for a crime should allow those incarcerated under the previous law a process to seek resentencing.

Alternatives to Incarceration

The League supports the expansion of prevention and treatment programs to ease the burden on the criminal justice system. The League supports the concept of pretrial diversion. The League supports approaches such as restorative justice which involve members of the community. The League supports the increased use of a range of intermediate sanctions in the community and the development of screening and supervision standards to ensure their appropriate use. The community must be educated regarding these alternatives.

The League supports a statewide probation system. Probation, the underlying element of most alternatives, must be professionally staffed and removed from political influence. Probation officers should be required to meet uniform professional standards and receive pre-service and in-service training. The number of probation officers should be adequate to make comprehensive investigative reports to the court, supervise categorized, manageable caseloads and provide social services.

Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC)

- The League supports correctional services that conform to national professional standards. This would include people receiving humane treatment and access to healthcare while they are incarcerated.
- The League believes that people in the custody of DOC are entitled to mail, telephone calls, visits from relatives, extended family visits, furloughs, the opportunity to voice grievances, and access to information in their case records.
- The League believes that people in the custody of DOC are entitled to participate in rehabilitative, educational and job training programs which are evidence-based and/or based on best practices. These programs should be made available to all for whom they are appropriate, should be tailored to individual needs, and should be provided in conjunction with the boards of education, private industry and unions.
- All people in the custody of DOC should have access to program credits.
- Pre-release planning and transitional living centers are critical for a successful re-entry and reintegration into society. They bridge the gap between prison and the community.
- The League supports mandatory supervised release (MSR) and the provision of community services to people who have been incarcerated, particularly when first released. Technical violations of mandatory supervised release need to be carefully defined and uniformly reported. The length of MSR should be determined by completion of goals which are tailored to the individual, rather than a strict period of time. The rules for MSR should be clearly explained along with the expected consequences for any violation of rules. The League believes parole officer caseloads should be manageable so that the officers are able to provide ongoing support.

Post Incarceration and Sentence Completion: From Recidivism to Successful Re-Entry

The League believes the removal of unnecessary barriers encountered by people with criminal records would enable a successful return to society. People with criminal records should have access to the same income-based support opportunities and services that are available to others.

Citizen Involvement

The criminal justice system should make use of professionally directed volunteers who have been carefully screened and trained. The League supports citizen involvement in monitoring court proceedings and assessing the needs for improved court facilities. An independent citizen's committee should monitor Illinois correctional facilities.

Funding

The League believes that the criminal justice system must be adequately funded in order to carry out its goals.

Funding of specialized programs such as mental health services, programs for women and substance abuse treatment, is essential. The League supports funding to guarantee humane prison conditions and provide programs and services that offer the opportunity for self-improvement.

The League believes that state funds should emphasize community sanctions and treatment instead of incarceration. All program funding should be periodically evaluated to determine its effectiveness and to ensure that proper populations are being served.

Death Penalty Abolition

LWVIL Position - 2001

LWVUS Concurrence - 2006

The League supports abolition of the death penalty in Illinois because it does not function as an appropriate punishment for the following reasons:

- In practice, the death penalty is unfair, it targets the poor and other vulnerable people— people who are mentally ill, mentally retarded, brain-damaged, and members of an ethnic or racial minority group.
- The death penalty is not a deterrent. States without the death penalty—Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan—have crime rates equal to or less than that of Illinois.
- The nations with which we most identify—the nations of the European Union and Canada, for example—have abolished the death penalty and consider it a violation of human rights.
- The death penalty does not serve the interests of family members of victims since the necessary and lengthy appeals process postpones the realization of justice and so, can retard the healing process.
- An error cannot be corrected if the death penalty is carried out on an innocent person.
- The death penalty is extremely expensive, due to the so-called precautions and extra measures taken to insure that only appropriate defendants receive the death penalty. Adding to the expense is the necessity for resentencing and retrials due to the extensive error-rate – nearly 50% of all cases in Illinois. Resources expended for the death penalty could be better used for positive programs that reduce crime and serve the victims of crime.
- Reform has been tried and has not worked. In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the death penalty statutes of 40 states. The Court held that extensive jury discretion over death sentences resulted in arbitrary sentencing and therefore resulted in “cruel and unusual” punishment. However, in 1976, after various states enacted reforms that limited discretion, the Supreme Court held that the death penalty was constitutional.

Illinois’ statute was a result of extensive reforms; and yet, the Governor’s Commission on Capital Punishment in April of 2002 identified 85 reforms that were needed to correct the system. Even though in 2003 a few significant reforms passed, the vast majority of the Commission’s recommendations were not addressed. Moreover, the Governor’s Commission recognized that even if every reform were adopted, the system would still not be error-free: “The Commission was unanimous in the belief that no system, given human nature and frailties, could ever be devised or constructed that would work perfectly and guarantee absolutely that no innocent person is ever again sentenced to death.” (Report of the Commission on Capital Punishment, Conclusion, pg. 207.)

Gun Violence Prevention

Handgun Control

1976

To curb the proliferation of the private ownership of handguns and their irresponsible use, the League supports a ban on the further manufacture, sale, transportation and importation of handguns and their parts.

The League supports restrictive regulation of all handguns and ammunition, enforcement of existing regulations and strict penalties for crimes committed with a handgun.

The League favors federal legislation governing the use of handguns, but will support legislation at all levels of government meeting League criteria. The League will not support state or federal legislation for specific areas only, such as metropolitan or high crime areas.

To ensure that handgun owners assume complete responsibility for their handguns, the League supports registration of the handgun itself so that it can be traced to its owner. There should be comprehensive licensing procedures, with gun safety education, fingerprinting and photographs, plus a verification of the applicant’s qualifications and a permit system that restricts handgun ownership. Sufficient fees should be

paid by handgun owners to cover administrative costs. Ideally, local or state governments should enforce federal standards.

The League supports handgun safety education only if it is required for owners as part of the licensing procedure, does not promote or glorify handgun usage or ownership, and is used to convey the dangers of handgun misuse and ownership.

The League supports regulation of handgun dealers. All dealers selling handguns must be carefully regulated to assure that they are legitimate dealers and not merely persons wishing to have access to interstate shipments. The League recommends high fees, annual renewal of licenses and a thorough investigation of dealers and their places of business. The League supports the need for further controls or elimination of mail order sales and interstate shipments.

Assault Weapons Control

1989

The League advocates restricting access to automatic and semi-automatic assault type weapons by private individuals. These weapons present a clear and unequivocal danger to public safety. Therefore, the League believes that it is essential to restrict or prohibit the possession and sale, manufacture, importation and transportation of semi-automatic assault type weapons for private ownership. Additionally, the sale of ammunition for these weapons should be restricted or prohibited. The League favors restrictive legislation at both the state and federal levels.

Immigration

2007

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes:

- That the State of Illinois should promote local community efforts to provide orientation and counseling services for immigrants regardless of documentation status. The State of Illinois should support funding efforts for these services by encouraging federal funding and by the use of funds from the state and local governments as well as from the private sector.
- That the State of Illinois should promote and fund educational programs and materials that seek to inform all workers, including documented and undocumented immigrants, of their rights in the workplace.
- That the State of Illinois should provide "driving certificates" or some other form of proof of driving validation to undocumented drivers, allowing those drivers to drive legally and ensuring that they would have passed a state driving test. LWVIL also believes the State of Illinois should permit and encourage auto insurance providers to issue insurance coverage to holders of such driving certificates.

LWVIL opposes:

- Deputization of state and local police to enforce immigration laws in Illinois.
- Legislation or ordinances at the state and local level that would penalize landlords for renting to undocumented immigrants.
- Legislation or ordinances at the state and local level that would prohibit the issuance of business permits to undocumented immigrants.

LWVIL does not support extending the right to vote to undocumented immigrants.

Income Assistance

1971, Revised 1997

LWVIL believes that the federal government should bear primary responsibility for financing programs designed to meet the basic needs of individuals and families.

LWVIL supports secondary state funding for income assistance and supportive services for all low-income individuals and families.

The administration of income assistance and supportive services requires the recruitment, retention, and training of sufficient numbers of qualified personnel; clear guidelines for responsibility; adequate information systems; and program evaluation.

Low and Moderate Income Housing

The Illinois League believes

- The State should plan for adequate supplies of low and moderate-income housing.
- Builders of large developments and planned unit developments should be required to provide a percentage of their units for low and moderate income housing.
- Some kind of fair-share plan should be developed so that every community will have a percentage of low and moderate income housing, rather than having it concentrated in a few areas of the state. This kind of housing should be attractive and diversified in design and should be subsidized by both state and federal levels.
- The League believes an educational program is needed to explain the need for and concept of low and moderate-income housing and that, when necessary, zoning laws should be revised to accommodate such housing.

Mental Health

1987 and 1989

The League supports a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for mental/behavioral health. The Illinois Department of Human Services should ensure both adequate state hospitals and community services to treat and rehabilitate the seriously mentally ill. These services should be integrated with those of other state agencies.

A state mandate that adequate and accessible community services be available for seriously mentally ill persons of all ages. The array of services should include: screening and evaluation, community hospitalization, medication management and counseling, crisis intervention, case management, day treatment, life skills programs, residential programs, job training, social and recreational activities, educational services, family support and respite programs, and transportation.

The State should provide adequate funding for state facilities and should be the primary source of funding for community-based mental health services. Local government, together with federal and non-government sources, should also contribute to community services. Funding should be tied to identified needs and effectiveness of services.

State and local government should share the responsibility for planning for community services; implementation should be left to local government. A system of local boards to administer funds for services for the mentally ill should be required throughout the state. The boards should have the power to tax and to allocate state and federal funds for community services and for hospitalization of mentally ill persons. The boards should coordinate and monitor community services.

The State should set and enforce standards for all mental health programs and facilities it funds. The State should also be responsible for evaluating community-based services. There should be minimum training requirements for professionals and other personnel working in state-funded programs. The State

should require local governments to provide in their zoning ordinances for residential programs for mentally ill persons.

The League encourages increased use of involuntary commitment to outpatient services of seriously mentally ill persons, when appropriate, to assist in keeping them from repeated and prolonged hospitalizations.

Insurance companies should be required to offer coverage for mental illness on the same basis as physical illness.

Community education about mental illness should be emphasized, and innovative ways to improve the delivery of community-based mental health services should be encouraged. Financial incentives should be offered to communities that reduce unnecessary hospital bed usage by providing adequate community-based services while assuring that mentally ill persons who need hospitalization will not be denied.

Schools

School Quality

1986 and 1987

Governance

The League believes that:

- The State of Illinois should determine a minimum program for Illinois elementary and secondary schools.
- The Illinois State Board of Education should assume the primary leadership role in initiating policy, establishing minimum standards, and coordinating delivery of services.
- The local school board should implement minimum standards and provide leadership in the community for program development. In addition, the local school board should make recommendations to the Illinois State Board of Education concerning programs for Illinois schools.

Primary Purpose of Schooling

The League believes:

- The primary purpose of schooling is the transmission of knowledge and culture through which children learn in areas necessary to their continuing development.
- Such areas should include the language arts, mathematics, biological and physical science, social sciences, the fine arts, physical development and health.
- Emphasis should be placed on the development of critical thinking skills and the integration of knowledge.
- Each school district shall give priority in the allocation of resources to fulfilling the primary purpose of schooling.

State Program Mandates

- The League supports the following instructional mandates: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies/history, foreign language, art and music, vocational education, special education, gifted education, early childhood education and health education. There should be flexibility in implementing mandates at the local level.
- Mandates such as metric measurement, career education, safety education and consumer education should be integrated into other programs rather than existing as separate mandates. Driver education and physical education, especially at the high school level, should continue but with more local options permitted. The League supports bilingual programs to enable non-English-speaking children to learn English as quickly as possible, but programs must be flexible.

- Local school districts should be required to provide the following services: media programs, school food services, pupil personnel services, student health programs, necessary transportation services and special services to disadvantaged children.
- The League supports state requirements for compulsory attendance and minimum standards for length of school day and school year. The League opposes any additional state-mandated school holidays.

State Standards for Schools and Students

The State should set standards for the recognition and accreditation of schools and school districts. The goals and learning objectives established by the State should be minimum standards, which local districts should enhance. Local districts should be permitted and encouraged to be flexible in the evaluation of students' learning of essential information and skills.

The State should set minimum achievement standards for graduation and promotion to various grade levels. Remediation programs should be provided at all levels of instruction for students achieving below grade level.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Education

- The League believes that the effectiveness of education should be evaluated by both class time requirements and knowledge gained as measured by mastery of learning objectives.
- Evaluation should include information assembled for the school/school district Report Cards, student test scores, programs offered, student/staff ratios, building standards, and qualifications of teachers. No one factor (e.g., test scores) should be used exclusively.
- The League does not support the withdrawal of funds from a school district that does not meet state standards, but does approve withdrawal of recognition as a last resort, after extensive and creative remediation efforts have been tried.

Personnel Issues

Teacher training and certification: The League supports stringent entrance requirements into a four-year undergraduate program for students who intend to teach. Such students should pursue an undergraduate course of study that primarily emphasizes the liberal arts and sciences and allows for early and varied teaching experiences. Certification should be granted after the student obtains a liberal arts and sciences degree, completes a successful period of internship and passes an objective test to ensure competency in basic skills and subject matter to be taught.

Staff Evaluation: The League supports a comprehensive evaluation process for both teachers and principals.

Teachers should be evaluated by administrators (principals, department chair or other administrators) and other teachers, all of whom should receive training in teacher evaluations. A comprehensive evaluation should be based on the following criteria: attendance, classroom management skills, instructional methods, knowledge of subject matter, continuing professional education and interpersonal skills.

Principals: Evaluations of principals should be done by administrators and teachers who are trained to evaluate. The evaluation should be based on the following criteria: ability to maintain productive parent-school relationships, organizational skills, ability to establish and preserve a positive school climate, instructional leadership, ability to objectively evaluate personnel and their teaching skills, continuing professional education and interpersonal skills.

Tenure: The League favors modifications in the tenure laws including extension of the two-year probationary period, establishment of a plan for periodic renewal of tenure and elimination of seniority as the sole criterion for dismissal of teachers when reducing the teaching force (RIF, reduction in force).

Quality: To ensure that the teaching profession attracts and retains highly qualified teachers, the League supports:

- An increase in beginning teachers' salaries financed either by the State directly or through grants to local districts to use at their discretion for increased salaries.
- An increase in the role of teachers in instructional leadership and management decisions

- Establishment of a career ladder for teachers which includes increased salaries for increased teacher responsibilities and an increase in salary for teachers who take advanced courses or obtain advanced degrees.

School Finance

1975, 1977, 1979, revised 1993

The League believes that:

- Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools should be provided stable, reliable and adequate revenue through a combination of federal, state and local sources.
- State funding levels should be sufficient to enable districts to provide for all students an education that meets both standards established by the State Board of Education and legislated mandates.

The League opposes additional mandates without state funding provisions.

- The State should not subsidize districts too small to meet state standards but rather should encourage consolidation through financial incentives.
- State standards for education should also address the importance of adequately maintaining and building school facilities.

General state aid to schools should be reviewed regularly, taking into account increases in the cost of living, professional estimates of the cost of quality educational programs, and regional differences in the costs of providing the same or similar services.

- The League strongly supports using a weighting factor for low-income students, believing that basic funding for disadvantaged students should reflect their need for additional services.
- Local districts should be held accountable by the State for the expenditure of money for programs that fill special student needs.

The distribution of state funds to public elementary and secondary schools should reduce financial disparities between districts and increase equity for students and for taxpayers.

- The State should concentrate its efforts on raising the level of the financial resources of poorer districts.
- Capping of allowable expenditure per pupil should not be used as a means to achieve equity.
- A reasonable minimum local tax effort, achievable without referendum, should be required for a district to receive equalization aid.
- The League strongly supports reduced reliance on local property taxes to fund schools and believes that the State should assume the major responsibility for funding public education.
- The League opposes proposals that would provide public funds for private schools.
- The income tax (preferably at a graduated rate) provides the most productive and equitable source of revenue for schools.
- The League opposes state assumption of the total cost of public education because it could diminish local control and educational innovation.

Higher Education Funding

2017

LWVIL supports sustained allocation of state funds for public higher education that will provide quality postsecondary programs throughout the state. Objectives for adequate public funding should be to:

- Provide affordable educational opportunities which foster global competitiveness for the people of Illinois and their employers
- Eliminate and prohibit barriers to funding higher education: constitutional, statutory, and regulatory
- Invest in capital construction and long-term maintenance of higher education facilities
- Attract, maintain, and retain quality teaching staff

In addition, the League supports sustained funding to attract, support, and retain qualified Illinois students through:

- State-funded, need-based financial aid
- State-funded, merit-based scholarships
- State-funded grants paying for research assistantships
- State-subsidized internships

Charter Schools

2001, updated in 2015

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports accountability, transparency, and equity in the use of public funds for education, including charter schools.

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes that

- Adequate and equitable funding is needed for all public schools, including charters. The financial impact on traditional public schools must be evaluated before charters are granted.
- Charter school authorizers should evaluate the performance of existing charters before granting new charters or approving additional campuses.
- Existing charter schools should be evaluated in incremental periods not to exceed five years (and preferably more frequently) for purposes of charter renewal.
- Charters should be revoked or not renewed if a school repeatedly or egregiously
 - Failed to meet content standards, pupil performance standards, or school climate standards identified in the charter contract.
 - Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.
 - Violated any provision of state or federal law from which the charter school was not exempt.
 - Discriminated against students based on characteristics such as family economic circumstances, disability, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.
 - Used curriculum or instruction that failed to maintain the separation of church and state.
 - Failed to admit prospective students periodically throughout the year as space became available.
 - Failed to enforce truancy laws.
- Employees should have the right to organize unions at charter schools.
- The authority for approving and renewing charters should reside exclusively in the local school board.
- Local voters should be able through referendum to request their school board to establish a charter school.
- There should be adequate provisions for education of the public and participation in the authorizer's decision-making process.
- If the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) or a body appointed by ISBE, such as the State Charter School Commission, has the power to reverse a decision by a local school board, local voters should be able through referendum to override the decision of ISBE or the appointed commission.
- There needs to be good communication among all public schools regarding effective innovations.

LWVIL has identified the following areas of concern about charter schools:

1) Financial impact on school districts. For example,

- Charters can place financial pressure on districts by drawing money out of the traditional public schools.
- When a student transfers between traditional public and charter schools, funding for that pupil should be prorated and transferred in a timely fashion.
- All property, equipment, and materials purchased by a charter school with public dollars should be surrendered to the local district if the school closes for any reason.

2) Privatization and profit-making. LWWIL opposes the presence of private, for-profit companies in the governance of public education. Subcontracting most of the management of a school to a for-profit organization should be prohibited.

3) Lack of transparency. Like other public schools, charter schools should be subject to disclosure of

- Potential conflicts of interest of members of the governing board
- Sources of revenue
- Salaries and benefit packages
- The identity of the owner of any property and buildings
- Admission processes

4) Virtual education (provided by computers off-site, with students spending little if any time in a brick-and-mortar school). Virtual education is not appropriate for elementary-aged students except in rare circumstances. Funding for virtual schools should be based on actual costs, rather than the same level of funding provided to other charter schools.

State Fiscal Policies

1977, 1980, 1981,
modified 1987, revised 1994

LWWIL supports a diversified revenue system which principally relies on a combination of broad-based taxes and user fees, is equitable, progressive, stable, responsive and simple.

Criteria: LWWIL supports a state revenue system which overall is based on the following criteria:

1. Equity - Imposes similar amounts of tax on taxpayers in like circumstances.
2. Progressivity - Is based on ability to pay so that those with greater ability pay a greater percentage of their income.
3. Stability - Provides a stable source of revenue.
4. Responsiveness - Is able to capture and reflect long-term economic growth.
5. Simplicity - Is easy and efficient to administer and is understandable to the taxpayer.

Income Tax: LWWIL supports a progressive income tax with a graduated rate schedule. Until the Illinois Constitution is amended to allow graduated rates, the flat rate income tax should be made more progressive.

Sales Tax: LWWIL supports a broad-based sales tax with exemptions for food and medicines to reduce the impact on low-income persons.

Property Tax: LWWIL supports the use of the property tax for partially financing education and local government and services. We support uniform, efficient and professional tax assessment procedures.

User Fees: LWWIL supports user fees structured and levied with a sensitivity to low-income persons.

Deductions, Exemptions and Credits: LWWIL supports achieving policy goals through direct expenditures rather than deductions, exemptions and credits. If deductions, exemptions and credits are used, they should:

1. decrease the tax burden on lower income persons and further overall progressivity.
2. be periodically reviewed to justify continuation.
3. be the most efficient means of achieving their intended purpose.

Local Implications: Distribution of state revenues to local government is an appropriate source of local revenue. LWWIL opposes statutory limits on local government's ability to raise taxes and spend revenue. Local services mandated by the State should have state appropriations linked to the mandate.

Gambling

1999 – Issued by the LWVIL Board of Directors

For 20 years, the League, based on our State Fiscal Policy position, has opposed gambling and expansions of gambling as a solution to Illinois' fiscal problems. Gambling distracts attention from the real fiscal problems that Illinois must address which include:

1. A revenue system that is outmoded and structurally flawed because it grows more slowly than the economy and is therefore unable to provide stable funding for state programs and services from one year to the next and
2. A tax structure that unfairly burdens the poor.

The League opposes gambling for the following reasons:

- Gambling revenue is only a small slice of the state revenue pie.
- Gambling revenue has low natural growth potential. It does not contribute to the ability of the state revenue system to capture and reflect long-term economic growth or to provide stable funding for state services and programs.
- Gambling is a regressive approach to raising revenue because it disproportionately impacts those with lower incomes, and does not improve the overall progressivity of Illinois' revenue system.
- Gambling and its various expansions give lawmakers the appearance of working to solve Illinois' fiscal problems but only provide temporary stop-gap measures and an excuse for avoiding long term solutions to Illinois' deteriorating fiscal health.

Action Guidelines For Local Leagues

The strength and integrity of all League action is based on the decisions of informed members. When a position is reached, the League speaks with one voice, the voice of a substantial majority, and the minority abides by that decision.

Leagues may, of course, decline to take action at any governmental level and maintain a public silence. But a League may not take action in opposition to official League positions.

Members may act as individuals in support of or opposition to League positions, but they must make it clear that they are acting on their own behalf and not on behalf of the League unless authorized by the appropriate board to represent the League.

The most effective action occurs when Leagues act at whatever level of government is most appropriate. For example, on a statewide issue, the most effective action occurs when local Leagues, acting in concert, lobby their own state legislators. Because legislators are most responsive to their own constituents, it is rarely effective for a local League to lobby a legislator representing a different area. For this reason, one of the most important criterions in adopting a study is whether the issue can best be addressed at the level of League that would undertake the study.

To ensure agreement on the interpretation of positions, to coordinate activities of the different levels of the League, and to enhance the effectiveness of League action campaigns, local Leagues are encouraged to consult with the state board about their action plans.

Consultation is **required** whenever the intended action would affect the jurisdiction of other Leagues and/or a local League wishes to act at the state or national level on an issue which has not been the subject of a state or national call to action.

Action at the Local Level

The decision to take action which will affect only your community rests with your local league board.

Local Position

In deciding to take action based on a local position, the board will want to consider:
whether the contemplated action falls within the relevant position
whether your members understand and support the action
whether the action would be effective in your community

State or National Position

Local Leagues are encouraged to take action in their communities based directly on positions from other levels of League. Consultation with a board member from that League level may be helpful in planning action strategy.

Involvement in the Absence of a League Position

Issues can arise quickly in a community where League input would be helpful but a lengthy study process leading to a local position is not feasible and there is no applicable position at another level of League. There are a number of ways that local Leagues can help resolve such issues and play a dynamic, visible role in the community. For example, they may:

- bring diverse constituencies together to define the problem and facilitate a common solution
- sponsor public hearings
- provide objective research and education on the community issue
- sponsor educational forums

When the League is involved in a community issue without the basis of a formal position, it is critical that the League representatives remain objective and neutral. The League's role is to help the community reach consensus or air differing viewpoints in a calm, objective atmosphere.

Action at the Regional Level

Action that would affect the jurisdiction of more than one League **requires consultation** with the boards of the other Leagues in the area involved.

The procedure to be followed will depend on the complexity of the issue and the number of Leagues involved. If only two or three Leagues are affected, all should agree (or have no objection) to the plan of action. If more than three Leagues are involved, there should be consensus on the contemplated action. You may contact a member of the state or ILO board for guidance.

Action at the State Level

Action that would involve contact with state government officials **requires approval** by the state board.

If your League is contemplating state-level action that has not been requested by the LWVIL board, please contact the LWVIL Issues and Action Vice President.

Legislation Affecting Only the Jurisdiction(s) of the League Wishing to Act

The contemplated action may be based on positions from any League level and, as a general rule, will be given clearance by the state board. Consultation is needed, however, not only to keep the state board informed about all state-level advocacy but also to ensure that there is no conflict with other LWVIL action and to ensure that the action proposed is based on complete and current information.

For example, in the course of a day a bill may be amended one or more times, and the League position may change accordingly. If action is approved, the local League may contact only its own legislators unless it has requested and received permission from other Leagues to lobby their legislators. Such was the case in 1993, when the DuPage County ILO successfully sought approval to lobby all state legislators on legislation relating to the DuPage County Airport Authority.

Legislation Affecting Jurisdictions Beyond Those of the League Wishing to Act

If the basis for the contemplated action is a state or national position, the state board will evaluate the proposed action in the context of its legislative priorities. Clearance will be given if there is no conflict with other LWWIL action.

If the basis for the contemplated action is a local position, the state board will exercise extreme care in determining whether to approve such action. While using a local position as the basis for state-level action does not provide the most effective method for action and should not circumvent the state program planning process (through which changes to current state positions or new study items may be proposed), there are occasional circumstances when a local League may wish to pursue such action.

In such cases, the local League will be asked to prepare a request for permission to act to be distributed to all affected Leagues. The request should include a description of the type, goals, impact and time frame of the contemplated action, including which legislators the League proposes to lobby, and to the greatest extent possible, the general effect of the proposed action on other local Leagues. The LWWIL Issues and Action Vice President will review the request prior to distribution. The state board will evaluate the responses of the local Leagues and determine whether to grant permission to act. Points the board will consider include:

- Is the legislation permissive or binding?
- What are the geographic impact, level and visibility of the contemplated action?
- Is the issue divisive at any level?
- Is there conflict with any local, ILO, or state League position?
- Do any local Leagues object to the proposed action and why?

Action at the National Level

Action that would involve contact with government officials at the national level **requires approval** by the national League.

If your League is contemplating action at the federal level that has not been requested by the national board, you must clear your plans with LWWUS. You may call the LWWUS office directly. If you have questions, you may contact the appropriate state legislative/issue specialist or the LWWIL Issues and Action Vice President for guidance.

The State and Local League Request Form for Federal Issues/ League of Women Voters is at <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/other-issues-tools/federal-action-request-form>