

2021-2023 State Program: Positions in Brief

GOVERNMENT

Education Action to support in principle the Basic Education Act (1977) and the Levy Lid Act. Action to obtain a balanced tax structure and to maintain uniform assessment practices to ensure equitable and sufficient financing. Action to support adequate and stable state funding of common schools in Washington including the costs of in-service training. Action to increase visibility, accessibility and accountability of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. Action to support closer links between schools and social services, so that every child is ready to learn. Action to support greater involvement of parents, an increased role in decision making for teachers, and more flexible state education requirements. Action to provide greater access to public higher education to all, at whatever point in life it can be beneficial. Action to expand the definition of Basic Education to include the birth to five years.

Port Districts Action to encourage cooperation among port districts, but with local options for voter control over major policy and expenditure decisions.

Privatization Core services, functions and assets critical to the well-being of the people, should remain with government and not be transferred to the private sector. Public agencies are required to make a documented finding of adequate return on investment for the public for any government contribution of funds or assets to the private sector. Government employees and elected officials after leaving government service should be prohibited for two years from working for any private company for which they had oversight responsibilities or authority over awarding contracts.

Representative Government Action to facilitate changes in the state constitution to achieve a representative and effective state legislature. Action to promote an informed electorate. Action to limit methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the election process. Action to support the initiative and referendum process, adopt improvements to the process and require additional information for voters. Action to protect the interests of all affected parties in considering the formation of new counties. Action to clarify in legislation the processes in county formation and to require that the entire county have the ability to vote on separation. Action to support election methods that promote "representative-ness," citizen participation and accountability and that produce proportional representation. Action to support a majority vote requirement if achieved through a mechanism such as Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). Action to support a primary that is "open" and encourages minor party participation if a primary continues to be used.

State Tax Policy Action to obtain a balanced tax structure that is fair, adequate, flexible and has a sound economic effect.

Washington State and Indian Treaty Rights Action to enhance salmon resources, establish a procedure for retrocession of jurisdiction to the tribes and support tribal land use planning of trust lands.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation The League supports a balanced state transportation policy that defines the role of the state and supports increases in funding to provide adequate revenue, flexibility, energy efficiency and safety in a multi-modal system of transportation.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Energy Action to support an energy policy within Washington State. Action to educate the public on energy conservation. Action to establish incentives for efficient use of current energy sources and the greater use of alternative energy sources.

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. (LWVUS)

Resource Management Action to obtain coordinated planning and ensure environmental quality in the use of water, air and land resources. Action to ensure that forest management is carried out in a manner that will sustain healthy forests, streams and habitats.

Waste Management Action for coordinated control and reduction of solid waste. Action to reduce the amount of hazardous waste generated in Washington and action to promote safe management of that waste which is produced, including toxics in the home.

SOCIAL POLICY

Administration of Justice Action to ensure that our courts are fair, efficient, accessible and staffed with qualified personnel. Action to maintain a separate court system and facilities for youths that will balance the procedural rights of the adversary system with the protection of youth's basic rights. Action to realize equity in sentencing standards. Action to obtain alternatives to incarceration is of prime importance.

Children's Programs

Child Support and Custody: The League of Women Voters supports vigorous, efficient and innovative child support enforcement methods and broad education regarding the responsibilities and consequences of parenthood. The best interest of the child should be the overriding consideration in determining custody, visitation and an appropriate level of child support. The physical and emotional security of the child should be paramount. Children are entitled to support adequate to meet basic needs commensurate with the parents' income, resources, and standard of living. Courts should have the discretion to order post-secondary educational support in appropriate circumstances.

Children's Services: Action to support stable and adequate funding for children at risk, with priority given to prevention, early identification and intervention services, community based treatment programs, day treatment programs and residential care.

Day Care for Children: Action to provide for the general welfare of children in day care centers. Action to ensure that the state enforce minimum standards that include provision for a safe, healthy, clean environment. Action to support sufficient staff with emphasis on competence and ability to provide a creative, challenging and caring environment.

Early Care and Education of Children: Action to support the quality of early care and education, birth – 5, to maximize the child's future development. Action to support parents so all children develop to their full potential. Action to support improvements to child care programs, quality child care programs for children birth to five, increased access to preschool programs, programs for special needs children, home visiting and encouraging public-private partnerships.

Economic Diversification Action to ensure a balanced state economy with a strong mixture of large and small businesses. Measures to contribute to long-range planning and cooperation between all levels of government with local initiatives wherever possible.

Gun Safety Action to provide governmental regulation of ownership and possession of firearms, and measures to limit their accessibility.

Health Care Action to provide universal access to affordable health services for all residents of the state of Washington and to control total system expenditures with seamless coverage regardless of one's health status.

Human Resources Action to achieve equal rights for all. Action to achieve equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability. Action to obtain measures that provide basic human needs for those unable to provide for themselves. Action to ensure that there are emergency support services for those involved in physical and/or mental violence.

Local News

Position in Brief

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes it is the responsibility of the government to provide support for conditions under which credible local journalism can survive and thrive.

The League of Women Voters of Washington defines local news as accurate, in-depth coverage of government entities, including but not limited to, city councils, county councils, county boards of commissioners, health departments, schools, and school boards.

Position

Local News (2023)

LN-1: The League supports credible and ethical local journalism, in whatever format it is published, as essential to our democracy.

LN- 2: The League of Women Voters of Washington supports efforts to ensure everyone has access to information necessary for casting an informed ballot and that credible local news sources are integral to this pursuit.

LN – 3: The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that support for the viability of local news may take a variety of forms. Control of the content must remain exclusively with the news organizations.

LN – 4: The League of Women Voters of Washington also believes media literacy and news education, including support for journalism students, is essential. These opportunities should be expanded in schools and throughout communities.

LN – 5: The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that everyone should have access to comprehensive, credible local news and that barriers to access should be removed. These barriers include, but are not limited to, geography, economic status, and education.

Shoreline Management

Background

In the early 1970s, the League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) was involved in an initiative to the Legislature that ultimately became one of the first environmental laws in the state, the [Shoreline Management Act](#) (SMA). The SMA is the basis for over 250 city and county shoreline master programs (SMPs) that apply to the shorelines of specific streams, rivers, marine waters, lakes and associated wetlands. During 1983-and 1984, League members assisted the Department of Natural Resources in reviewing and revising its harbor area and aquatic lands management policies. In 1983, the League contracted with the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) to assess, via a telephone survey of state citizens, statewide public perception of the then ten-year-old SMA. During the 1995 legislative session, the LWVWA worked with the Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform to strengthen the SMA. In December 2000, Ecology adopted [new shoreline regulations](#), which business and development interests challenged legally. The LWVWA intervened in the lawsuit and participated in mediation, which resulted in strengthening the SMA rules. In 2000 and 2001, the League supported continuing the state's aquatic reserve system, which had been established in 1971 to protect aquatic lands that have special educational, scientific, or environmental importance.

The Department of Ecology proposed amendments to the SMA in 2017 that would have weakened the important "no net loss (NNL) of ecological functions" provision required in all SMPs. The LWVWA testified at the public hearing and signed a group letter that successfully opposed weakening this provision. In 2018, during Ecology hearings on a rules update, the LWVWA advocated to add a requirement to the SMA for evaluating climate change impacts, including sea level rise. In 2019, the LWVWA supported the recommendations of the [Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force](#) established by Governor Jay Inslee. Five bills passed that will reduce threats to endangered orcas.

At the 2019 LWVWA Convention, members adopted a proposal for a new two-year Shoreline Study on current shoreline conditions, projections, and issues. In 2021, the state legislature enacted [SB 5273](#), an important bill concerning the replacement of shoreline armoring. League members have been involved in shoreline protection, both statewide and in local SMPs, supporting the use of least-impacting, technically feasible bank protection alternatives for protecting fish life when replacing residential marine shoreline stabilization or armoring.

In 2021, the Washington State Legislature adopted a budget proviso in [ESSB 5092](#) directing the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to submit a report to the legislature on how to incorporate a “net ecological gain standard into state land use, development, and environmental laws and rules to improve statewide performance on ecological health.” The SMA was specified as one of the land use laws that must be addressed. In early 2022, the LWVWA released its Shoreline Study, which evaluated the impact and effectiveness of the state’s SMA. The LWVWA approved the Shoreline Study and it went through a consensus process.

After the [LWVWA Shoreline Study](#) was finalized, the Washington Academy of Sciences (WSAS) issued its [Report on Net Ecological Gain](#) in July 2022. That report had been commissioned by the WDFW as part of the 2021 legislative session budget proviso. The WSAS report concluded that the NNL standard had not been effective in protecting and maintaining ecological functions. The report cited a number of reasons for this failure, including poor implementation, inadequate restoration and funding, and the lack of assessment of its effectiveness.

Upon receipt of the WSAS report, the WDFW analyzed the possibility of incorporating a new net ecological gain (NEG) standard into state law. The LWVWA participated in the WDFW’s process as a stakeholder. In December 2022, the WDFW issued the [Net Ecological Gain Standard Proviso Summary Report 2022](#), in which it also concluded that the NNL standard is not working, but stated that the true impact of that standard is largely unknown. The WDFW cited the inconsistent implementation, enforcement, and measurement of the NNL standard as reasons why it didn’t work. The WDFW report included 15 recommendations, including adopting a NEG standard mandate for public projects and making the standard voluntary for private projects. Other recommendations include establishing metrics and a baseline for measuring NNL as well as monitoring, incentives, and funding for implementing that standard.

Position

Shoreline Management (2023)

SM – 1. The primary goal of the SMA is to protect the ecological functions of our shorelines. Therefore, when balancing legislative goals, environmental protection should be overarching and not considered co-equal to the goals of development.

SM – 2. SMPs should include an assessment of and response to climate change impacts using the best available science.

SM – 3. To improve the effectiveness of the NNL standard for shoreline ecological functions, governmental entities regulating the use or development of shorelines should take the following actions:

- Clearly define baseline conditions against which NNL can be quantitatively monitored;
- Establish standard metrics for measuring NNL;
- Require evaluation of whether an SMP is achieving NNL during periodic updates;
- Improve funding for restoration, monitoring, enforcement, and data collection for baseline conditions and incentives; and
- Require the application of the NNL standard at both the policy and project levels, with strict adherence to a mitigation hierarchy.

SM – 4. The state of Washington should continue to explore pathways to implement, measure and improve the implementation of the NNL standard and the NEG standards based on evolving environmental policy. At a minimum, the state should follow the recommendations in the 2022 *WDFW Net Ecological Gain Standard Proviso Summary Report*.

SM – 5. State funding sources should include specific dedicated requirements for local government staff training and enforcement of the SMA.

SM – 6. Shoreline permit exemptions granted by local governments should be routinely submitted to the Department of Ecology and be consistently assessed to ensure exemptions are properly administered.

SM – 7. The Department of Ecology's SMA oversight role should include scheduled reviews of local governments' shoreline permitting programs, particularly the granting of permits and exemptions. This review should identify jurisdictions assessed, include Ecology's response, and be publicly available.

SM-8. As technology and circumstances change over time, the state should review "priority uses" and/or "preferred uses" and update those priorities and/or preferences if warranted.

SM – 9. Public access plans should be developed to provide maximum access to the shorelines in a way that will minimize human impact on shoreline ecological functions.

SM –10. Public education about shorelines is critical to gaining and nurturing public acceptance and stewardship of our shorelines. Jurisdictions charged with shoreline protection should prioritize public education to support the protection and enhancement of public and private shorelines.