



2023 Issue Paper: Housing and Homelessness

Position Statement

The LWVUS believes that the “federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability” and “ In order to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families, the LWVUS supports policies and programs designed to prevent or reduce poverty.”

The LWVUS has worked on fair housing since the late 1960s and supported passage of fair housing since 1980. In 2002, the LWVUS formally endorsed legislation to establish the National Housing Trust Fund, which uses surplus funds from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to create new housing for low-income families. In 2005, the LWVUS urged Congress to create the Affordable Housing Fund, a long-overdue step toward addressing the housing crisis that confronts low- and extremely low-income families. It also urged House members to protect activities of the nonprofit groups providing the bulk of housing services for our poorest communities.

The LWVUS has specific criteria for income assistance, supportive services, and housing supply in its [Impact on Issues 2020-22](#).

The LWVWA policy on housing, HO-1, states that “All levels of government and the private sector share the responsibility to help alleviate the housing shortage in the low-income sector. Identifying housing needs and planning to meet these needs is best done at the local level. The state should set minimum standards for safe and decent housing and provide for their enforcement. Policies should be formulated to allow for maximum use of available federal funding as well as encourage the participation of industry, business, local and nonprofit groups in meeting housing needs. The state government should provide information, assistance, and coordination for housing programs at all levels.”

Legislative Background

The prevailing cause of homelessness is the widening gap between housing costs (both purchase and rental), which are increasing dramatically, and wages, which are not. It is important to recognize that many adults experiencing homelessness are employed. After the eviction moratorium ended, many landlords instituted exorbitant rent increases. The massive shortfall of housing units in Washington state, which disproportionately affects low-income people, has increasingly been acknowledged by the Legislature, as has the need for homelessness prevention measures and services to support people experiencing homelessness.

In 2022, policies that increased protection of tenants, added eligibility for the youth independent housing program, and created a policy of housing as a medical need, thereby allowing supportive housing to be funded upon the release of someone experiencing homelessness from the hospital, were all passed. Financial support for home ownership, new affordable housing unit development, rapid rehousing, weatherization and utility support, tenant representation in eviction proceedings, affordable housing tax incentives, and much more, were all funded in the 2022-adopted budget.

In addition, a number of Growth Management Act amendments focused primarily on creating more opportunities for affordable housing by increasing density and allowable housing types, such as ADUs, were proposed and League supported them; but none of them passed.

Upcoming 2023 Legislative Session

In the 2023 session, League will support enactment of the bills attempted in 2022 that did not pass. Additionally, League will support the proposals of the [Washington Low Income Housing Alliance](#) (WLIHA), to which LWVWA belongs. These include:

- Appropriation of \$400 million to the Housing Trust Fund
- Consideration of additional funding sources for that Fund
- Investment in homeless prevention, cash assistance and the Housing and Essential Needs program.
- Increased support for tenants, including eviction prevention and some form of support for tenants experiencing exorbitant rent increases

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