



PROGRAM IN ACTION 2023-2024

**A Leader's Guide
to State Program**

Updated November 2023

Introduction

The Program in Action is designed to help League Leaders make effective use of the state program. It is a brief summary of studies, consensus, and action taken by the League of Women Voters of Washington since the 1920s. League positions are included in their entirety.

One of the purposes of the League of Women Voters is to act on selected governmental issues. At its biennial convention, the LWVWA determines areas of study for the next two years. This process begins with member input. The state board compiles program suggestions and then recommends studies to the membership for approval at the convention. After study and discussion, consensus may be reached. This consensus becomes the basis for future action.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that government policy, programs, and performance must meet these criteria:

- + competent personnel with clear responsibilities,
- + agency and intergovernmental coordination,
- + adequate financing,
- + effective enforcement, and
- + well-defined channels for citizen input and review.

Local Leagues can act on state positions if a state position applies to the local governmental jurisdiction.

Leagues should be cautioned, however, that if there is any question as to whether the contemplated action is authorized under a state program position, clearance and clarification should be sought from the state League.

What it amounts to, really, is a question of courtesy and communication. As issues become more complex, one League's interpretation of an issue can be different from that of the state board or of another nearby League. Seeking a cooperative solution to the problem will benefit everyone. If the action involved affects governmental jurisdictions beyond the local League(s) desiring to take an action, clearance and concurrence must, of course, be obtained from the affected boards as well as the state board.

Principles of the League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education which provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes that 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 which affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies which facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

These principles are concepts of government
adopted by the national convention of the League of Women Voters.

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Legislative Action: Working Together to Influence Public Policy

Effective lobbying on state and national legislative issues depends on a partnership at all League levels—lobbying in Washington, D.C., Olympia, and constituent lobbying at home.

The LWVUS Advocacy Department leads the organization's federal lobbying work and provides information to state and local Leagues about advocacy priorities.

The LWVWA Action Chair and Lobby Team lead statewide advocacy efforts. This is of course based on established League positions and is guided by the legislative priorities set by the LWVWA board each year

The LWVUS volunteer Lobby Corps (LC) of some 20 Washington-area League members lobbies each month when Congress is in session. Each Lobby Corps member is assigned specific state congressional delegations. Contact the LC chair through the national office for the name of the LC member assigned to your delegation.

The Lobby Corps acts as a liaison between LWV lobbyists on Capitol Hill and local and state Leagues. The grassroots lobbyist works with LWV leaders and activists in targeted states and congressional districts to help develop and implement grassroots lobbying strategies. Call the LWVUS if you want to talk about lobbying strategies or have questions about LWVUS issues, and call if you would like written materials or want to schedule training on grassroots strategies or on getting press coverage.

While it is the job of both the LWVUS and LWVWA Boards to take the lead in national and state action respectively, advocacy is every League's and every member's business. The work of the national Lobby Corps and the state lobby team can only have real impact when it is supported by members. Each local League president is expected to respond to calls for action and encourage their members to do so as well.

The League is a highly respected advocacy group. By encouraging your members and Board members to contact their legislators on key League issues you and they are greatly enhancing the League's clout. It is important to remember, though, that **only a League spokesperson, usually the president, speaks in the name of the League.** Individual members can take action on their own behalf.

Lobbying in Washington, D.C., and Olympia is vitally important, but direct lobbying of members of Congress (MCs) and state legislators by constituents often is the key to persuading them to vote for the League position. The arguments that League leaders and members make to your elected officials can make the difference in how they vote.

Members of Congress (MCs) return to their states or districts regularly during congressional recesses. Most

state legislators work out of district offices when the legislature is not in session, which is usually June through December of odd-numbered years and March through December of even-numbered years. This is a good time to schedule meetings with them or to talk with them at public events. Please inform your state League and the LWVUS Advocacy Department of your lobbying efforts, along with any important information uncovered during your lobby visit or call (reports may be sent to action@lwwwa.org).

The LWVUS may call League presidents before critical votes in Congress or when in-depth and ongoing grassroots lobbying is needed from your area. LWV presidents also will receive sample op-ed pieces and letters to the editor on issues on which we are actively lobbying.

LWVUS communications on priority legislative issues include:

Action Alerts. Members of the Grassroots Lobby Corps and local and state League presidents receive alerts by email at critical times in the legislative process. An alert not only asks Leagues and League members to take action on a key issue, but also provides substantive and political background information. A quick and easy system for sending an email directly to MCs also is provided.

Each state and local League is expected to take whatever official action is requested in response to a national Action Alert. A League board may choose not to respond to a particular call to action but may not take action in opposition to a position articulated by the LWVUS on federal or national issues, or the state League on state issues. Individual League members of course are always free to take action on whatever they choose; as long as they do so in their own name and leave no impression that they speak for the League.

Legislative Action Center on the LWVUS website. Current Action Alerts, Legislative Updates and other advocacy tools are posted on the LWVUS website at www.lwv.org.

LWVWA communications on priority state issues include:

Legislative Newsletter. This is emailed every Sunday during the legislative session. It includes the top priority action alerts for that week and updates on activities in Olympia. It also includes links to special webpages dedicated to each issue area—see below.

Advocacy Issue Webpages. LWVWA now has a webpage for each issue area. The webpages are updated weekly and provide current action alerts for each issue, timely updates, important background information as well as links to valuable references.

Both the LWVUS and LWVWA Boards annually adopt a set of advocacy priorities to guide its advocacy work.

The goals are to:

- Enhance the League's effectiveness by concentrating resources on priority issues;
- Build the League's credibility and visibility by projecting a focused and consistent image;
- Ensure that the League has sufficient issue and political expertise to act knowledgeably; and
- Enable the League to manage resources effectively.

In setting legislative priorities, the Boards consider the following:

- Opportunities for the League to make an impact;
- Program decisions made at Convention and/or Council;
- Member interest; and
- Resources available to manage effectively.

The LWVUS Bylaws provide that Leagues may act on national program only in conformity with positions taken by the LWVUS.

REQUESTS FROM STATE/LOCAL LEAGUES FOR PERMISSION TO ACT AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

All action at the federal level must be authorized by the LWVUS board. This includes any effort aimed at influencing a decision on a federal issue, such as communicating with an elected or appointed official, joining a coalition, taking part in a press conference or rally, or writing a letter-to-the-editor. A state or local League wishing to work in this way on a federal issue or at the national level must consult with the LWVUS about the intended action.

As part of this consultation process, the state/local League is asked to provide the following information in writing:

1. The proposed action and the message to be conveyed;
2. The LWVUS position on which the action is based;
3. Evidence that the issue is a priority for that state or local League.
4. Relevant attachments

Leagues are asked to provide this information on the Federal Action Request Form, which can be found online at www.lwv.org/federal-action-request-form

If a local League is requesting permission to contact its U.S. Senator(s) on an issue that has not been the subject of an LWVUS Action Alert, it should also provide evidence that the action has been authorized by its state League. Appropriate LWVUS Board and staff will review the action request to determine that it is consistent with League positions and that it will not interfere with LWVUS action on a priority issue.

Role of Local Leagues in State Action:

1. In General:

- a) Local Leagues and individual League members are encouraged to participate in state legislative action.
- b) The local League's action chair is the liaison with the state League's action chair, state lobbyist and portfolio chair.

2. Action at the state level under local positions:

Because of the possibility that local Leagues may differ in the positions they have developed on various issues, action at the state level on local positions is rare. A local board may agree, without permission from the state board, to use a local position as authority to take action on a state measure provided:

- a) the measure applies solely to the proposing League's jurisdiction AND
- b) the state board is notified of the proposed action and the action strategy.

3. Action at the state level by local Leagues:

Local Leagues, through the local League action chair or state action chair, must coordinate and receive approval from the state League Advocacy Chair, or Lobby Team Chair in consultation with the appropriate Issue Chair prior to taking any action based on state positions. Members may speak on behalf of League positions provided they quote from *Program in Action*, the *Legislative Newsletter*, the Priorities card or individual Issue papers.

Adapted from LWVUS Impact on Issues (2014-16) to include LWVWA Advocacy Policy.

For additional information on LWVUS Advocacy go to *Impact on Issues* (<https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>).

2019-2021 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 and Democracy The League of Women Voters of Washington believes it is the responsibility of government to provide support for conditions under which credible local journalism can survive and thrive. The League 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.

Summary of Current LWV Program

Whatever the issue, the League believes that efficient and economical requires competent personnel, the clear responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among agencies and levels of government, effective enforcement and well-defined channels for citizen input and review.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT	
LWVWA	LWVUS
<p>EDUCATION Action to support in principle Basic Education Act (1977) & Levy Lid Act; to obtain a balanced tax structure & to maintain uniform assessment practices to ensure equitable & sufficient financing; to support adequate & stable state funding of common schools including costs of in-service training; to increase visibility, accessibility & accountability of office of SPI & State Board of Education; to support closer links between schools & social services, so every child is ready to learn; to support greater involvement of parents, an increased role in decision making for teachers, & 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.</p> <p>Public Education League of Women Voters believes that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12. A quality public education is essential for a strong, viable and sustainable democratic society and is a civil right.</p> <p>PORT DISTRICTS Action to encourage cooperation among port districts, but with local options for vote control over major policy and expenditure decisions.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Promote open governmental system that is representative, accountable & responsive.</p> <p>EDUCATION See SOCIAL POLICY</p> <p>VOTING RIGHTS <i>Citizen's Right to Vote.</i> Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote. <i>DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation.</i> Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government & full voting representation in both houses of Congress.</p> <p>ELECTION PROCESS <i>Apportionment.</i> Support apportionment of congressional districts & elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population. <i>Campaign Finance.</i> Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure public's right to know, combat corruption & undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office & promote citizen participation in political process. <i>Selection of President.</i> Promote election of President & Vice-President by direct popular. Support uniform national voting qualifications & procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.</p> <p>CITIZEN RIGHTS <i>Citizen Right to Know/Citizen Participation.</i> Protect the citizen's right to know & facilitate citizen participation in government decision making. <i>Individual Liberties.</i> Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights. <i>Public Policy on Reproductive Choices.</i> Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.</p> <p>CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENCY <i>Congress.</i> Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision-making capability & effective performance. <i>The Presidency.</i> Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive & legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.</p>

<p>REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT</p> <p>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. Amended position resulting from 2012 Conservation District study.</p> <p>STATE TAX POLICY</p> <p>Action to obtain a balanced tax structure that is fair, adequate, and flexible & has sound economic effect.</p>	<p>PRIVATIZATION</p> <p>Ensure Transparency, accountability, positive community impact and preservation of the common good when considering the transfer of governmental services, assets and/or functions to the private sector.</p>
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TRANSPORTATION	
LWVWA	LWVUS
<p>TRANSPORTATION</p> <p>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.</p>	

NATURAL RESOURCES	
LWVWA	LWVUS
<p>ENERGY</p> <p>Action to support an energy policy within Washington; to educate public on energy conservation; to establish incentives for efficient use of current energy sources & greater use of alternative energy sources. Updated in 2013.</p> <p>CLIMATE CHANGE</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection & wise management of natural resources in public interest.</p> <p>NATURAL RESOURCES</p> <p>Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.</p> <p>CLIMATE CHANGE</p> <p>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</p>

<p>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. Additional positions resulting from 2012 Conservation District study.</p> <p>WASTE MANAGEMENT Action for coordinated control & reduction of solid waste; to reduce amount of hazardous waste generated in Washington & to promote safe management of that waste which is produced, including toxics in home.</p>	<p>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT Promote resource conservation, stewardship & long-range planning with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.</p> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND POLLUTION CONTROL Preserve the physical, chemical & biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health & the environment.</p> <p>Air Quality. Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.</p> <p>Energy. Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.</p> <p>Land Use. Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.</p> <p>Water Resources. Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.</p> <p>Waste Management. Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.</p> <p>Nuclear Issues. Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.</p> <p>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION Promote public understanding & participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible & responsive management of natural resources.</p> <p>AGRICULTURAL POLICY Promote adequate supplies of food & fiber at reasonable prices to consumers & support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices & increased reliance on the free market.</p> <p>FEDERAL AGRICULTURE POLICIES Provide financial support to subsidize agriculture in specific instances, enforce federal antitrust laws to ensure competitive agricultural markets and apply clean air and water regulations to all animal and aquaculture production. The federal government should fund basic agricultural research to provide adequate safety of our food supply.</p>
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SOCIAL POLICY	
LWVWA	LWVUS
<p>ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION Action to ensure balanced state economy with strong mixture of large & small business. Measures to contribute to long-range planning & cooperation between all levels of government with local initiatives wherever possible.</p> <p>CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS</p>	<p>Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.</p> <p>EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY Equal Rights. Support ratification of Equal Rights Amendment & efforts to bring laws into compliance with goals of ERA. Education, Employment, Housing. Support equal access to education, employment & housing;</p>

Child Support & Custody. Support vigorous, efficient and innovative child support enforcement methods & broad education regarding responsibilities & consequences of parenthood. Best interest of child, including physical & emotional security, should be overriding consideration in determining custody, visitation and appropriate level or child support. Children are entitled to support adequate to meet basic needs commensurate with parents' income, resources, & standard of living. Courts should have discretion to order post-secondary education support in appropriate circumstances.

Early Care and Education of Children. Action to support programs and policies to improve the quality of child care programs so children develop to their full potential, supporting parents as a child's first teacher, increasing access to programs for children birth to five, preschool, special needs children, encouraging public-private partnerships and expanding the definition of Basic Education to include the birth to five years.

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

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.

HEALTH CARE

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

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

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

Sentencing Policy: The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

Federal Role in Public Education. Support federal policies that provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12.

FISCAL POLICY

Tax Policy. Support adequate & flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall & relies primarily on a broad-based income tax;

Federal Deficit. Promote responsible deficit policies;

Funding of Entitlements. Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability & health insurance.

HEALTH CARE

Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of care for all U.S. residents & controls health care costs.

IMMIGRATION

Promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas. Ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

Support programs & policies to prevent or reduce poverty & to promote self-sufficiency for individuals & families.

Income Assistance. Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.

Support Services. Provide essential support services.

Housing Supply. Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable environment for every American family.

CHILD CARE

Support programs & policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.

EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN AT RISK

Support policies & programs that promote the well-being, development & safety of all children.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Support violence prevention programs in communities.

GUN CONTROL

Protect the health & safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility & regulating the ownership of handguns & semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

URBAN POLICY

Promote the economic health of cities & improve the quality of urban life.

<p>GUN SAFETY Action to provide governmental regulation of ownership and possession of firearms, and measures to limit their accessibility.</p> <p>LOCAL NEWS AND DEMOCRACY The League of Women Voters of Washington believes it is the responsibility of government to provide support for conditions under which credible local journalism can survive and thrive. The League 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.</p>	<p>DEATH PENALTY The LWVUS supports abolition of the death penalty.</p> <p>SENTENCING POLICY The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.</p> <p>HUMAN TRAFFICKING Oppose all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking.</p>
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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	
LWVWA	LWVUS
	<p>Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.</p> <p>UNITED NATIONS Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.</p> <p>TRADE Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.</p> <p>U.S. RELATIONS WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.</p> <p>ARMS CONTROL Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.</p> <p>MILITARY POLICY AND DEFENSE SPENDING Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.</p>

For complete LWVUS position statements see
<http://lww.org/content/impact-issues>

Government

EDUCATION

POSITION IN BRIEF: Action to support in principle the Basic Education Act (1977, 1993, 2009) 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 access to public higher education to all, at whatever point in life it can be beneficial.

BACKGROUND: The League's long-standing interest in education began in the 1930s when League worked for a non-partisan Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In the 1940s League worked for adequate funds for schools. School funding was a part of the "Fiscal Issues" study (1968) and the resulting position has been the basis for action. Delegates to the 1974 State Council adopted an emergency study of schools. On the basis of materials prepared by the Spokane Area League, LWVWA published The Common Schools of Washington. Consensus following the resulting study further expanded our position. The 1975 Convention adopted a two-year study, "Financing the Common Schools: Where Does the Money Come From and Where Does the Money Go?" In addition to our studies, League joined a statewide coalition to enhance our school funding lobbying efforts. Member education continued with the study: "Schools: Impact of Full State Funding" (1982).

The end of 1983 saw new alliances for the League. League worked with the Washington Roundtable Education Task Force and joined a statewide coalition on educational reform. As a member of the Citizens Education Center Northwest, the League co-sponsored "The Education Campaign."

In 1989 League voted to update the educational position through an analysis of "Programs that Work." This study resulted in additional positions in 1991, improving the League's ability to take effective action in the state legislature.

At the 1995 state LWV convention, delegates adopted a study of "Public Higher Education in Washington State." League members reached consensus and adopted a new position titled "Higher Education." Delegates at the 1997 state convention decided to continue the study and adopted "Public Higher Education in Washington State: Part II." When an important new source of information became available to League members and the public, the co-chairs of the LWVWA Public Higher Education Study, Part II, recommended no study report be published, and chose to monitor the work of the Governor's Commission.

In 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2012 League opposed charter school initiatives and a referendum and helped defeat three out of the four. League joined a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of I-1240, and in 2015 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the challenge. The 2016 Legislature passed a revised charter school bill, League joined the lawsuit against it. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court ruled that charter schools are constitutional in October 2018.

In 2005 League became a member of a coalition formed to pursue a school-funding lawsuit: Network for Excellence in WA Schools (NEWS) that partnered with the McCleary family to file a lawsuit in 2007. In 2012 the Supreme Court ruled that the State was not amply funding education. By 2018 the State provided billions of dollars of new funding, and on June 7, 2018 the Supreme Court relinquished jurisdiction over the case.

In 2007 EHJR 4204, a constitutional amendment authorizing school district levies to be approved by a simple majority of those voting, was passed by the voters. League had spent many years advocating for Simple Majority, and in 2009 received the Service to WASA (WA Assoc. of School Administrators) Award for campaigning for Simple Majority and against Charter Schools (funding).

In 2020 League championed ESSB 5395, Comprehensive Sexual Health Education, through the Legislature and with a positive result of a referendum on the ballot. Now, students in all school districts will have an equal opportunity to receive medically accurate sexual health information.

In 2021 League helped pass ESSB 5044 adding equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism to existing cultural competency training for school board directors, district staff, and school staff. This bill supports League's strong policy on DEI.

In 2022 League helped pass HB 1664 increasing prototypical school funding for physical, social, and emotional support in schools for the first time since 2011.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON EDUCATION:

K-12 Public Education

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

K-12-1: The state has the responsibility to determine uniform education standards, and the means to evaluate performance, and to provide ample and equal opportunity for education in the common schools. (1968, 1977, 1991)

K-12-2: The state has the responsibility for amply funding both education, through the BEA, and those social services needed to ensure that every child regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability is ready to learn and safe in his or her educational environment. Closer links between schools and social services should be forged. (1991, 1997)

K-12-3: All programs mandated by the legislature should be fully funded by the state. (1975)

K-12-4: Maintenance and operation costs of local school districts should be fully funded by the state. The state should also contribute to the costs of in-service training. (1977, 1991)

K-12-5: A simple majority is sufficient for passage of a special levy. Voter approval should be required only in the case of special levies required to support special programs. (1977)

K-12-6: The position of Superintendent of Public Instruction should be an administrative position and the State Board of Education should be a policy-making body. (1975)

K-12-7: School facilities should be used to the fullest extent, including such activities as day-care programs. (1975, 1991)

K-12-8: Citizen participation should be encouraged at all levels. (1975)

K-12-9: The state should work toward facilitating more parent involvement in education. Teachers should have an increased role in decision making. (1991)

K-12-10: State education requirements need to be flexible. (1991)

The LWVWA believes the State of Washington should support:

K-12-11: Expanding the definition of Basic Education to include the birth to five years. (2009)

Higher Education (1996)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

HE-1: The purpose of higher education is to gain knowledge and skills that lead to enhancement of life, work and citizenship. Higher education should be available to all, at whatever point in life it can be beneficial.

HE-2: Public post-secondary education for qualified students must be a high state budget priority. Costs should be shared by several entities—state, federal, business, industry, and students and families—with the state bearing major responsibility.

HE-3: To provide greater access to higher education and absorb anticipated enrollment increases, we support:

- Modifying I-601 to raise spending limits to be more responsible to demographic needs
- Increasing student financial aid
- Enhancing distance learning opportunities through more and better utilization of technology and establishing more branch campuses and/or off-site classes.
- Improving coordination and cooperation among all institutions in the present higher education system
- Better utilization of existing facilities and equipment

HE-4: Higher education continues to play a necessary and important role in training and retraining the work force. While business and industry should participate in this effort, the higher education system must maintain control of curriculum development. Business and industry should work closely with the higher education system to communicate needs and to provide practicum, work study and apprenticeship opportunities.

PORT DISTRICTS

POSITION IN BRIEF: Action to encourage cooperation among port districts, but with local options for voter control over major policy and expenditure decisions.

BACKGROUND: The Puget Sound LWV adopted a position statement on Puget Sound ports in 1973. The State LWV, however, did not have a unified state position until the adoption of the first part of our current position in 1989. The study was initiated because of the recent rapid expansion of shipping through Washington ports.

Traditionally ports have not received much public scrutiny. Though the responsibility for accountability lies with the public

as well as the ports, there has been a feeling that port districts could make more active efforts to involve the public and reach out with information aimed at the public.

The position adopted in 1989 was expanded in 1993 following the 1991 convention decision to further study Washington's ports, focusing on issues of governance.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON PORT DISTRICTS: *The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:*

PD-1: The powers of and limitations on Washington's public port districts should be clearly defined and appropriate to their functions. Mechanisms for accountability must exist and responsibility for oversight must lie with the public. Local options should be made available to voters

for greater control over major policy and expenditure decisions of local port districts. State enabling legislation may be required to create these mechanisms, and they should be flexible in order to reflect the particular needs

and characteristics of different ports and their communities.

PD-2: For purposes of marketing and advertising, we support a unified strategy. Local autonomy should be

maintained in the areas of operations and administration. In all areas cooperation should be encouraged. (1989, 1993)

PRIVATIZATION

POSITION IN BRIEF: *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.*

BACKGROUND: The Seattle-King County LWV completed a study on Privatization in 2010 and approved a position on Privatization. LWVWA concurred with the Seattle-King County position on Privatization (with minor revisions) at the 2011 Convention.

The Seattle-King County study indicates that in the United States privatization has focused on deregulation of and reduction of taxes on industry as well as a move toward privatizing government services such as education, prisons, Social Security, Medicare, and military services and parks.

The federal government's record neglect of basic infrastructure needs as well as continuing erosion of funds available for programs to support human services of the last 30 years have strained local governments to find replacements. Loss of funds has put pressure on local governments to figure out how to make up the difference without politically unpopular increases in rates for services or increased taxation. The result has been a trend in our state, counties, and cities to transfer services to the private sector.

With many examples of privatization in our region, it is time to assess. What are the basic services that must be

performed by government? How do we pay for them? Which services, functions and assets could be effectively transferred to the private sector? Are there government programs that should never be transferred to the for-profit private sector—and if so, what are the criteria? These questions are critical to the creation of new League policy, positions, and actions to fit the times. The National LWV adopted a position no privatization in 2012.

In 2020, based on the privatization position, the LWVWA decided to support the formation of a public bank, which would be owned by the state and/or local and tribal governments. A public bank would enable amplification of public funds through fractional reserve lending and would return the profits of banking with the public's money to the public. Because of a lower cost structure, it could offer financing for public projects at lower rates than are available from private sector banks. These measures would both increase the financial capacity of our governments and enable more efficient use of public funds. This issue progressed during the 2021-22 legislative session and is expected to be pursued further in 2023.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON PRIVATIZATION: *The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:*

PR-1: 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.

The following criteria should be the basis for decisions regarding whether government services, functions and assets should be transferred to the private for-profit sector:

Criteria: Does the proposed transfer

1. serve the public interest today as well as for future generations;
2. align with public health and safety concerns;
3. assure quality of life for residents in the region;
4. ensure adequate government control and oversight including performance audits;

5. include provisions for transparency, public involvement and competitive bidding; and
6. protect individuals from abuse.

PR-2: 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. Periodic performance audits should be required and made public regarding whether stated public benefits were met.

PR-3: 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

POSITION IN BRIEF: Action to facilitate changes in the state constitution to achieve a representative and effective state legislature. Action to ensure convenient access to registration and to the ballot. Action to promote an informed electorate. Action to limit methods of financing political campaigns 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 access for citizens to initiate or modify legislation through the initiative and referendum process. 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 can vote on separation. Action to allow more options for alternative election systems that promote "representative-ness" such as proportional representation, citizen participation and accountability and a primary that is "open" and encourages minor party participation.

BACKGROUND: In the early '50s, the League began a study of election procedures. This study focused on districting and reapportionment. At the 1955 convention, delegates recommended that the League write and promote an initiative to accomplish redistricting. After a difficult signature campaign, Initiative 199 was passed by the voters (1956). *I-199 represented the first balanced and fair redistricting plan for Washington in 27 years. In the next session, the Legislature completely reversed the plan and put back the districts that existed previously.*

The League's study of the role of the "State Constitution" began in 1955. A study and consensus relating to the legislative and executive articles followed this initial two-year study. Our study/consensus of the judicial branch is now included in the Administration of Justice position. As part of the study, the "Effectiveness of the Legislative Branch of Washington State Government," the League published two "Facts and Issues" on structure, specific reforms and procedural changes (1971). A position was reached on criteria for an effective legislature.

In 1963 when national interest was focused on civil rights and non-registered voters, League responded by adopting a study of election laws and procedures. The resulting position enabled League to work for an improved voters' pamphlet, simplified procedures for registration and voting as well as shorter residency requirements. The League has long supported the "motor voter" concept, which makes it easy to register to vote at the time of car license renewal. This concept became Washington state law in 1990.

The League has been actively involved in the establishment of the Public Disclosure Commission. League members have served on the Commission and League has joined the Coalition for Open Government to continue "watch-dogging" this legislation.

As a result of a study adopted at the 1983 convention, the League published the study material *Campaign Financing*. The League supported Initiative 88, a campaign finance reform measure, and participated in the signature campaign, which was unsuccessful.

The Regional Governmental Structures position is based on a Puget Sound League position, adopted by concurrence in 1981.

In 1983, the Washington State Constitution was amended to set up a five-member, independent, bipartisan politically appointed commission. Specific criteria for drawing districts

were written into law and included equal population, contiguous, compact, preserving county and city boundaries, communities of interest and no undue favor to political party or class.

The League was actively involved in the signature drive for Initiative 99, calling for a presidential primary, in 1988. After the required number of signatures was received, LWVWA worked for legislative approval during the 1989 session. After passage in March of 1989, the first presidential primary in Washington was held in 1992.

In 1991-92, the League led a coalition of good government groups and others in developing a campaign reform measure, Initiative 582. Unfortunately, the signature campaign again fell short.

After several years of League lobbying, in 1993 the state legislature approved legislation to allow registration up to 15 days before an election instead of 30 days and to allow voter registration by mail.

In 1997 LWVWA concurred with the LWV Snohomish County position on the formation of new counties in Washington. This position will enable League to push for legislation to clarify the process for forming new counties and to ensure protecting the interests of all affected parties.

A task force to study and make recommendations regarding the date for primary elections was established. League was represented on the task force. The mission of the task force included, but was not limited to, a review of the issues relating to the timing of the primary elections, the canvassing of ballots, and the certification of election results. The resultant proposal to the Legislature included several recommendations such as setting the primary date on the 2nd Tuesday of June and eliminating the 30-day post session freeze on contributions to elected officials. The Legislature did not pass the proposal.

In 1999 the LWVWA adopted a two-year study, "An Evaluation of Major Election Methods and Selected State Election Laws."

This study, completed in 2000, described several election systems which could serve as alternatives to the "first past the post" system used in the US. Election methods dealing with both multi-member and single-member races were described. The study provided a list of criteria for election methods which were ranked by League members. Representative-ness, citizen participation and accountability received top ranking.

The term “representative-ness” was coined to signify the degree to which a legislative body reflects the demographic make-up of the state (mirrors the political preferences of the voters, including ethnic, racial, philosophic, or minorities) and to signify protection of the right to representation for ethnic, racial, philosophic and other minorities.

In 2000, the United States Supreme Court ruled that California's blanket primary denied political parties' right to freedom of association. League members recognized that Washington's blanket primary would be affected by that ruling. They agreed that if a primary were to be retained it should be “open” and not require a statement of affiliation with the party.

Recognizing the complexities of the topic of election methods, delegates at the 2001 LWVWA convention adopted a one-year continuation of the Election Methods study focusing on the three alternative election methods:

- Instant Runoff Voting (also referred to ranked Choice Voting as) for single winner offices (produces a majority vote winner.)
- Choice Voting (Single Transferable Voting) for representative bodies used to achieve proportional representation.
- Cumulative Voting (achieve semi-proportional representation)

League members concluded that the State should enable jurisdictions in Washington to use alternative election methods, particularly those that would result in proportional representation.

League studied the value of a Citizen Initiative Review (CIR) through a process called Citizen Jury. A publication, “Direct Democracy”, produced in the fall of 2002, included a review of recent initiative/referendum history and a study of requirements and regulations adopted by other states and of proposals that might work to improve the process in Washington. The League adopted positions that would place restrictions on paid signature gathering and require sponsors to recommend ways to compensate for the financial impact.

Concerns about the accuracy of election results, the security of new electronic voting machines and the requirements established in the national Help America Vote Act (HAVA) led to adoption of a two-year study called “Voting Inside & Outside the Box” at the 2003 state convention. “Voting Equipment and Procedures on Trial” (Part I) was published later that year. It includes an analysis of HAVA, a definition of terms, a summary of new technology for casting and tallying votes and arising security issues, as well as absentee/vote by mail. “Voting Inside and Outside the Box” (Part II) followed in the fall of 2004. It updated implementation of HAVA in Washington State, and looked into the certification of voting equipment, the statutory timelines for elections and continued presenting issues involved when conducting a vote by mail. New positions resulting from these studies were adopted by the 2005 League Convention.

Delegates to the 2005 Convention voted to continue for two years the examination of our election system and of ways to improve it when they adopted “Election Reform”. The scope includes all issues involved in improving elections in Washington State, Status of the state’s implementation of HAVA and changes made by the 2005 legislature. A new position resulted from the study.

In 2009, League approved a study to examine the election methods and procedures of the Conservation Districts throughout Washington and determined that those elections should be held in regularly scheduled General or Special Elections.

Since 2010, League has lobbied for bills that would improve voter registration and access to the ballot. These included Automatic Voter Registration, preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds and moving the deadline for voter registration closer to election day.

In 2016-17, a LWVWA committee evaluated the effectiveness of Washington’s Redistricting Commission by interviewing past commissioners and staff. The report called A Review of Redistricting in Washington State suggested improvements in representation, transparency and public input.

2018 was a major year for progress on representative government bills. The top priority bills the League had been lobbying on for at least seven years became law. These included:

- Washington Voting Rights Act, which required local jurisdictions to modify their election systems if they resulted in a lack of representation for protected classes,
- Automatic Voter Registration,
- Same Day Voter Registration and
- Pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds.

This package of bills is expected to greatly increase the number of people who are registered to vote.

There was also progress in campaign-finance reform when the Washington DISCLOSE Act passed. This bill required nonprofits who made significant campaign donations to reveal their major donors.

Also, in 2018, LWVWA began lobbying on election security and supported a successful bill that required post-election audits after every election. This bill gave auditors the option to perform risk-limiting audits, which is the gold standard for post-election auditing.

The League was also successful in defeating a bill that would have put the option of email voting for all voters into law. At that time Washington had an administrative rule that allowed any voter to return their ballot via an email attachment. The defeat of this bill gave the Secretary of State the option to change that rule. After the League demonstrated for leading public policy officials, the ease with which an emailed ballot could be hacked, the Secretary of State released emergency rules eliminating the option for most voters in Washington. Email voting is a security concern due to the possibility of the ballot being modified in transit without the

voter or the election official ever knowing. In addition, there is the risk of malware being carried into election officials' networks by email attachments.

In 2019, the League saw the passage of a long-time transparency priority, a requirement that campaign communications list the actual top five donors—individuals or corporations—rather than hide that information behind shell Political Action Committees (PACs). We also successfully supported the establishment of prepaid postage for all ballots.

The League supported the successful effort to count prisoners in their home districts and not in prison for the purposes of redistricting and to provide information and assistance in registering to vote for those who were leaving the prison system and had their voting rights restored.

In 2020 we worked successfully to expand ballot access for young people by supporting the Voting Opportunities through Education Act (VOTE), SB 6313. This new law allows youth who will be 18 by the time of the general election to vote in the preceding primary. It also set up student engagement hubs at public universities where students can register to vote, get a replacement ballot, and get nonpartisan voter information.

Also that year we worked with county auditors to pass a bill, [HB 2421](#), that required the state to pay its proportional share of the cost of elections. This did not simply change the funding formula also enabled auditors to depend on a stable source of funding and made them less dependent on county councils for their entire budget.

In 2021 we continued to expand access to the ballot by supporting HB 1078 which reinstated voting rights for those convicted of a felony immediately upon release from prison, rather than at completion of "community custody". This made integration into the community immediate and cleared confusion over who was/was not eligible to register to vote."

In 2022, four League-supported measures were signed into law. Restricting open carry of weapons on school grounds WA State Capital grounds was expanded to include any government meetings such as: School Board meetings, Balloting Centers, and Public Hearings.

To aid in decision making about ballot measures, the League supported disclosure on the ballot of the fiscal impact of adopting any ballot measure causing a net change in state revenue. Brief impact statements will let voters know which agencies are affected and by how much if that measure is adopted.

Additionally, we supported exempting from public disclosure voter information that was previously found on ballot return envelopes and signature correction form envelopes. This guarantees privacy.

The League also supported making state policy boards (state boards, commissions, councils) more representative with stipends available for low-income or underrepresented community members so they can serve on policy making boards making decisions impacting their particular community.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT:

Campaign Financing (1985)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- CF-1:** The enforcement powers of the Public Disclosure Commission should be strengthened. This includes the ability to assess higher fines. The funding level of the PDC should provide for sufficient staff to audit all appropriate reports including those of lobbyists. Public education should be a funded function of the PDC.
- CF-2:** Campaign contributions should be limited. These limits should apply to both in-state and out-of-state contributions. The PDC should implement laws pertaining to these limitations.
- CF-3:** The length of political campaigns should be shortened.
- CF-4:** Related position: See the fourth item under Election Laws and Procedures, below.

Election Laws and Procedures (1964-67, 2003-04, 2005-07)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- EL-1:** The Voters Pamphlet performs a valuable service in promoting an informed electorate and should be continued at state expense. The intent and effect of each ballot issue should be clearly set forth in language readily understandable by the voter. A clear distinction should exist between explanation and argument and the

term "official" should apply only to the former. Obvious untruths and emotionalism should be eliminated.

- EL-2:** Voting procedures should serve the voter with a maximum of convenience, simplicity and efficiency while ensuring that the requirements of secrecy, accuracy and impartiality are maintained.
- EL-3:** Permanent, personal registration should be continued. Lists of voters should be accurate and current. Registration should be simple and convenient for voters while ensuring accuracy. The Voter Registration State Database (VRSD) should not be used to deny people the right to vote. No proof of citizenship other than the sworn signature on the registration form should be required for Voter Registration. Random audits of all ballots, with the percentage of ballots audited to be determined by a statistician. The mail-in ballot postmark deadline should be Election Day. Provision should be made for absentee registration when registration is otherwise impossible.
- EL-4:** Regular and full disclosure of campaign finances for both ballot issues and candidates is necessary before primary and general elections.
- EL-5:** Political parties should play an important role in election campaigns by recruiting, helping to finance and campaigning for qualified candidates.

EL-6: Validation of excess levy elections should not be based on a percentage of voter turnout in a previous election. This permits those who do not exercise their franchise to vote to determine the outcome of an election. In order to authorize an excess levy, it should not be required that 3/5 of those voting on the proposition must vote in favor. Although there may be justification for requiring an extraordinary majority for voter approval when long-range or fundamental changes are involved, there is no justification when excess levy elections are necessary for maintenance of current services.

League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

EL-7: Verifying the accuracy of election equipment by providing independent, voter verifiable ballots that can be recounted when a recount is needed

EL-8: Automatic, mandatory audits of election results of randomly selected precincts

EL-9: Extending HAVA deadlines and the protection and provision of HAVA funds to the states

EL-10: The present system, allowing voters in most counties the choice of voting by mail or going to a polling place

EL-11: Certification of Washington State election equipment using Washington State certification methods. Washington State should be able to certify and use equipment whether or not it is in use in another state

Election Methods (2000, 2002, 2012)

The League of Women Voters of Washington:

EM-1: Supports state election laws allowing for more options for alternative election systems in governmental jurisdictions at both the state and local levels.

EM-2: Believes that consideration should be given, when evaluating election systems, to how well they promote “representative-ness”, citizen participation and accountability, as well as keeping the cost of elections within range by holding them in regularly scheduled General or Special Elections.

EM-3: In the event that the primary continues as a part of Washington's election system, (LWVWA) supports a primary that has the following elements: is an “open” system not requiring advance party registration, keeps voters' party preferences from becoming a matter of public record and encourages minor party participation.

EM-4: Supports a presidential primary only if the results play a decisive part in selecting party nominees.

EM-5: Supports adoption of election methods that produce proportional representation when electing representative government bodies such as councils, legislatures and Congress.

EM-6: Supports the concept of a majority vote requirement for winners of single offices such as mayor or governor, as long as it is achieved using a voting method such as the Instant Runoff Vote, rather than a second, separate runoff election.

Formation of New Counties (1997)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

NC-1: Education is a required component of protecting the interests of all affected parties in considering the formation of new counties. Educational methods should include public hearings, forums, speaker's bureau involvement, use of voter's pamphlet. The media should be encouraged to inform the public on the fiscal impact of new counties on services and taxes, and to use educational material including a background of the law, constitutional and statutory, relative to the formation of counties.

NC-2: General Law should be enacted by the legislature to clarify the processes in county formation. Clarifying legislation should address the following topics: the definition of a petition; the definition of a voter; identification of the fiscal rights and responsibilities of the parent and seceding county/counties; requirement that the entire county have the ability to vote on separation.

Initiative and Referenda (1995, 2003)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

IR-1: Initiative and referendum processes in Washington, which provide access for citizens to initiate or modify legislation.

IR-2: Use of the emergency clause to prohibit referendum only when strong criteria have been met.

IR-3: Raising the filing fee for initiatives and referenda to a minimum of \$100.

IR-4: Changes that would:

- Provide information to citizens, including, but not limited to, sponsors and major financial supporters of the measure through the Voters' Pamphlet and other outlets;
- Place restrictions on paid signature gathering;
- Require clear and accurate ballot titles, summaries and a clear statement of intent;
- Require initiative sponsors to suggest ways in which revenue losses or budget increases might be covered, either through program cuts or increases in revenue sources;
- Provide information on projected financial impacts on revenue and budgets to be published in the Voters' Pamphlet;
- Provide an advisory opinion as to the constitutionality of an initiative after it has been certified to the ballot;
- Encourage use of the indirect initiative process; that is, initiatives to the legislature.

Redistricting and Reapportionment (1955, 1958, 1959, 1975)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

RR-1: Both houses of the state legislature should be apportioned substantially on population. Districts should be convenient, contiguous and specific standards for fair representation should be assured.

RR-2: The responsibility for redistricting and reapportioning should rest with an agency independent of the legislature. The alternate agency should not be a court, but a judge may be a member. Definite provisions should be made for compensation and staff services of

the alternate agency. Power of initiative and referendum should be reserved to the people.

RR-3: Machinery should be provided to effect automatic, compulsory, periodic redistricting and reapportioning. Measures to enact this machinery should include authority, enforcement powers, time schedule and funding. The specific measure may take the form of a constitutional amendment, legislation, initiative and/or referendum.

RR-4: Specific provisions should be made for court review of redistricting and reapportioning measures and for courts to require the alternate agency to act.

RR-5: The state should be redistricted and reapportioned every ten years as soon as possible after taking the census. Definite time limits should be set for an agency to act after decennial federal census figures are available. Time limits should be set for initiating court action for review of constitutionality of measures.

Regional Governmental Structures (1981)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

RG-1: Any regional governmental structure must have a legally assured base of revenue and appropriate enforcement powers.

RG-2: Policy planning, coordination and data collection should be regional in scope.

RG-3: Open governmental processes and improved media coverage are essential to develop citizen understanding and participation in regional issues.

State Constitution (1966-67)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

SC-1: A constitution should be brief, concise, flexible, clear and free of obsolete provisions. It should be an expression of fundamental law and should be free of statutory law.

SC-2: The process for amending the constitution should require more than a simple majority but not the 2/3 legislative majority presently required. A process should exist to provide for partial revision by article, section and/or subject ("gateway amendment").

Washington State Legislature (1973-75)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

LE-1: The length and operation of the state legislature should encourage the participation of "citizen" legislators. The legislature should have the power to convene itself.

LE-2: An effective state legislature should be efficient and operate with a minimum of conflict, wasted time and duplication of effort.

LE-3: To ensure accountability, procedures should be open and understandable. Legislators must have access to objective information and should be responsive to the views of all the citizens of Washington State.

LE-4: The responsibility for setting legislative salaries should lie with an independent commission. The compensation for legislators should be adequate and encourage the participation of "citizen" legislators.

STATE TAX POLICY

POSITION IN BRIEF: Action to obtain a balanced tax structure that is fair, adequate, flexible, and has a sound economic effect.

BACKGROUND: League records indicate that state taxes have been on the agenda since 1953.

During the '50s the legislature increased the sales tax, business and occupation tax and cigarette tax creating a renewed interest in the tax structure. A study based on the League's publication, *The Tax Primer* (1957), produced a position favoring an income tax and repeal of the sales tax on food (1959). Over the subsequent decades, League has continued to update and expand our positions with studies of property taxes, assessments, state expenditures, state and local fiscal relations, exemptions and in 1980-1981 a review of state tax policies. In 1981 convention voted to delete the 1959 position statement relating to the state's fiscal management processes because LWV's recommendations had been implemented.

In 1981-1983 state revenue collections were below projections. This led to the re-imposition of a tax on food and an increase in most tax rates and fees. League joined with other concerned citizens in pointing out that the crisis emphasized flaws in the tax system. Per capita income rose but business and personal spending, which are the basis for excise taxes, declined. The League believed that the state's unduly heavy reliance on excise

taxes is not appropriate and would be improved by the addition of a tax on personal and corporate income. Recommendations made by the Governor's Tax Advisory Council were not acted upon and a proposal for a constitutionally limited income tax was not reported out of committee.

Through the 1980s and '90s, various proposals to the tax structure were made but no significant shifts occurred.

In 2003 the LWVWA Convention authorized a two-year program—an updated study and materials for a public education program. The updated study was published in 2004 in full length format and in executive summary and is available on the LWVWA website. The education program, developed in 2005, has included a Speakers Bureau, a speaker's kit containing a Power Point CD, transparencies, and commentary; and, materials for mass distribution including a Tax Facts trifold, Tax Bucks, and a brochure advertising the Speakers Bureau.

Washington State's tax structure has been known for years to be the most regressive in the US. However, a major shift in Washington's tax structure occurred in 2021, with League's support. The legislature's approval of the capital gains tax

combined with the working families tax credit will shift the system more toward a balance.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON STATE TAX POLICY:

Property Tax Administration (1965)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- PA-1:** Specific figures and details such as assessment levels, mileage limit and classification should be left to legislative determination according to the needs of the time.
- PA-2:** Constitutional provisions should be enforced with effective penalties or regulation from the state level.
- PA-3:** Equity and uniformity both within and among counties in the administration of the property tax are of major importance. The state should have a primary role in regulation and enforcement to ensure uniform assessment levels and adherence to laws and standards of performance.
- PA-4:** Training and quality of personnel, adequate budgets and staff should be a concern at both state and local levels.
- PA-5:** The assessor should be a technical administrative officer and should not have tax policy-making powers. Qualifications should be set for the position of assessor. The decision as to whether or not the assessor's position is elected or appointed should be determined by the legislature and not specified in the constitution.
- PA-6:** The taxpayer should have a greater role in the taxing process. Information should be understandable and readily available.
- PA-7:** More information should be included on or along with the tax statement. True and fair value (100% value) should be listed on the tax rolls and tax statement. Each property owner should receive tax statements.
- PA-8:** The appeals procedure should be simple, convenient and responsive to the taxpayer. The taxpayer should be notified of revaluation in ample time to appeal should s/he desire to do so. Appeals boards, courts or boards of equalization should be separate, qualified bodies at county and state levels.

Property Tax Exemptions (1969, 2005)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- PE-1:** Exemptions from property tax should be limited but may be valid when used to further public policy such as encouraging education, cultural or humanitarian causes.

- PE-2:** Property tax exemptions should not be used to encourage location of industry or as a reward for public service. Property of private or nonprofit groups used for business activities should not be exempt.
- PE-3:** The state should assume the responsibility for revenue lost to local governments because of property tax exemptions granted by the state. Property otherwise exempt should pay for direct public services such as fire and police protection.
- PE-4:** When exemptions are used, the state must assure uniform application. Exemption provisions should be carefully and periodically examined. There should be a periodic inspection of exempt property to assure compliance with the law. Exempt property and its valuations should be listed. The list should be made available to the public.
- PE-5:** Property on which the tax is unduly difficult or expensive to administer should be taxed in some other way, for example: income tax on intangibles, excise tax on boats and cars.

Tax Structures (1959, 1965, 2005)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- TS-1:** Inequities in the distribution of the tax burden should be removed. Ability to pay is an important criterion. Flexibility and recognition of changing times and needs is important in tax policy. Only broad general principles of taxation should be included in the constitution. Income should be part of the tax base preferably through a graduated net income tax. The sales tax should not be levied on food. Business should be taxed on net income rather than gross receipts.

General Tax Exemptions (2005)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- TE-1:** Any tax exemption proposal should be carefully evaluated for purpose, benefit and cost; and, all tax exemptions should be periodically reviewed.

WASHINGTON STATE AND INDIAN TREATY RIGHTS

POSITION IN BRIEF: Action to enhance salmon resources, establish a procedure for retrocession of jurisdiction to the tribes and support tribal land use planning of trust lands.

BACKGROUND: Following the Boldt Decision (U.S. vs. Washington) in 1974, it became obvious that many Washingtonians did not understand Indian treaty rights and their impact. In 1979 a study was adopted whose goal was to provide more knowledge of treaty rights and to implement the national Human Resources position ("support of equal

rights for all regardless of race or sex"). A "Facts and Issues," *Washington State and Indian Treaty Rights*, was published in August 1980, and a state position was reached in 1981. Under this position, League has co-sponsored or attended meetings and workshops, joined the coalition for Cooperative Fisheries Management in an attempt to defeat Initiative 456 and

supported efforts of the state and the tribes to reach an agreement with Alaska and Canada to save the Northwest salmon. A treaty between the United States and Canada resulted.

The League supported a bill for retrocession of criminal jurisdiction to the Colville Tribe in 1986, and another returning child custody decisions to the tribes in 1987. Both passed.

In 1993 the League supported the successful passage of retrocession of jurisdiction to the Quileute, Chehalis and Swinomish tribes.

In the 1995 legislative session the League supported bills of retrocession for the Muckleshoot and Tulalip tribes, and both passed.

Fifteen Western Washington Indian tribes finally secured their right to harvest half of the naturally occurring shellfish in Puget Sound when the U.S. Supreme Court on April 5, 1999 refused to review an appellate court ruling against the state et al.

Legal maneuvering leading up to the shellfish ruling began in 1989 when the fifteen tribes went to court asserting that the treaties of the 1850s giving the Native Americans the right to fish and hunt in their usual and accustomed places applied to shellfish as well as anadromous fish. In December 1994 Judge Edward Rafeedie ruled in favor of the tribes except for those beds staked or cultivated by citizens.

In December 1995 all sides—waterfront owners, commercial growers, the state and the tribes—appealed Judge Rafeedie’s ruling to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Its decision, in January of 1998, extended tribal harvesting rights to half of the natural shellfish production on commercial shellfish beds. Special provisions apply to private beaches and to artificially created oyster beds.

State Attorney General Christine Gregoire has declared it in the state’s best interest to cooperate with the tribes to

preserve and enhance shellfish beds. The League of Women Voters of Washington’s study material of 1980 provides background information that remains highly relevant. Among the positions reached is, “It is the state’s responsibility to enhance the salmon resource by protecting the fish habitat.” The courts’ decisions and the attorney general’s response compel the state to enhance shellfish beds as well.

Building on these treaty right success’s, in 2001, twenty-one Northwest tribes, joined by the United States, sued Washington State in the famous “culvert case,” *Washington v United State*. The tribes sought state owned culverts blocking salmon access to upstream habitat be removed. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court which in 2013 affirmed lower court rulings that the state had a duty under the treaties to preserve fish runs and habitat. This strained the budgets state agencies including the Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources and State Parks. As the legislature took on the funding to undertake this court decision over the following years, the LWVWA supported subsequent bills, mainly in the Transportation budget, for funding the removal of culverts obstructing salmon and steelhead passage.

The League also supported the Yakama Nation in its effort in the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan to restore fish passage to the existing dams in the Yakima River. It also supports the Chehalis Confederated Tribes and the Quinalt Nation in their opposition to a new dam on the Chehalis River as part on the Chehalis River Basin Plan. In the 2021 session the League also supported a bill to have a statue of Billie Frank Jr, the long time fighter for treaty rights and Chair of the Northwest Indian Fish Commission, to represent the State of Washington as one of two statues in the National Statuary Hall. A bill was also passed to streamline the process for salmon habitat restoration projects.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON WASHINGTON STATE AND INDIAN TREATY RIGHTS: *The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:*

IT-1: A special relationship exists between the United States government and Native American tribes. This relationship recognizes the dependent sovereignty of the latter and the constitutional recognition of treaties made between the U.S. and tribal governments.

IT-2: It is the state's responsibility to enhance the salmon resource by protecting and improving the fish habitat and

to establish a procedure for retrocession of jurisdiction to the tribes as authorized by federal civil rights legislation.

IT-3: Tribal governments have sole jurisdiction of land use planning of trust land on Indian reservations.

IT-4: State and local governments must cooperate with tribal governments in matters of land use and zoning on fee patent land within reservation boundaries.

Transportation

POSITION IN BRIEF: 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.

BACKGROUND: Transportation policy and funding have been long-standing League advocacy issues since a “Study of Transportation Planning, Administering and Financing” was adopted at the 1973 convention. The LVWUS and the Puget Sound Leagues (PSL) had previously developed positions on transportation. PSL with concurrence from the local Leagues had lobbied the legislature for a department of transportation and for tax money for public transit. Since then, League has been extensively involved in transportation planning at the Puget Sound Regional Council (formerly the Council of Governments) as well as at the legislature, and League’s work has involved modes of travel, funding and governmental structure, highway planning, energy considerations, alternatives to existing systems and planning issues. To this day, transportation action often interfaces with other state and national program positions, particularly land use and air quality.

In 1992 the LWV King County Coordinating Committee established a Puget Sound Transportation committee, which included LWV representatives from the Leagues in King County and from Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties. This group has been instrumental in supporting the regional transit system.

Transportation funding has been constrained by several factors. First, there is a state constitutional restriction on the use of gas tax money. That source of funds can only be used to finance the highway system, though that system is now defined to include ferries. Second, transit has never been a high priority in the state system. Third, there have been repeated attempts via initiative to restrict the motor vehicle excise tax (also called car tab fees) to a very small amount. The success of I-695 in 1999 substantially restricted transit funding and added a voter approval requirement to any tax or fee increase in Washington State. Although this was declared unconstitutional, the legislature adopted the very low \$30 car tab fee which has remained in place except for voter approval of special propositions in local areas. It has been the primary alternative source of money for functions that the gas tax cannot fund.

Delegates at the 2001 convention adopted by concurrence the update of the LWVWA transportation position proposed by LWV Seattle after a two-year study on Transportation and Land Use and as amended and recommended by the LWVWA Board of Directors.

A significant system change occurred with voter approval of Sound Transit in 1996, which League supported and has helped to defend against various moves to kill it.

Initiative 776, opposed by LWVWA, was passed in 2002, designed to remove the MVET (motor vehicle excise tax) used to regionally help finance Sound Transit. It also cut other transit agencies funding. A Court decision allowed Sound Transit to continue to collect the MVET because it was committed to pay for bonds already issued until the year 2028.

Delegates at the 2005 Convention approved a two-year study on the ferry system in Washington State. A new position resulted from the study.

Delegates at the 2009 Convention approved as amended concurrence with LWV/Tacoma-Pierce County position on transporting of freight. The amendment was to replace the words “lessen the amount” with the words “reduce the number.”

In 2022, a new transportation funding package was passed. The \$17 billion, 16-year package includes historic levels of funding for transit, active transportation and alternative fuels and vehicle electrification. Additionally, free transit and ferry fares for youth under age 18 were funded. Additionally, in 2022, expansion of broadband service was funded. Broadband relates to transportation as infrastructure that can reduce vehicle use.

In 2023, League emphasis will be on increased transit service and transit-oriented land use development, with environmental justice provisions.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON TRANSPORTATION (2001, 2005-07, 2009): *The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:*

T-1: Transportation projects and programs should be prioritized to develop a balanced and seamless transportation system. Population, topography, location of transportation facilities, community livability and character, jobs/housing balance, environmental impacts, social factors, energy consumption and political realities must be considered.

T-2: Transportation is an important basic public planning tool, and should be consistent with regional and local long-range growth management plans and adopted local land use plans.

T-3: Transportation is a state, regional and local responsibility that requires coordination, cooperation and communication to develop regional plans.

T-4: There is a need to define the state’s role and to develop and adopt complementary regional plans and transportation improvement programs.

T-5: Effective transportation financing will require that any earmarking of funds should be statutory rather than constitutional. In addition, the Constitution should be changed to allow use of gas tax funds for balanced transportation. Funding for all modes of transportation should be adequate and predictable. Appropriations by the Legislature should follow cost/benefit budgetary review of alternative modes. The cost/benefit analysis should include transportation demand management strategies as well as financial incentives and disincentive programs that reduce solo trips and encourage transit and other transportation options.

T-6: Ferries in Washington State are part of the highway system and should be funded as such. Passenger-only ferries should be funded as are other modes of public transportation. The fare box should not be expected to totally fund ferry operations in Washington State.

T-7: Transportation systems dependent on public financing should be publicly controlled. Transportation should be considered a public service with capital, maintenance and operating costs subsidized consistent with the subsidization of the operating costs of other public services.

T-8: Prior to revising highway corridors, cities and other jurisdictions that are adversely affected by the increased capacity must have the choice to plan and adequately finance integrated and sustainable transportation systems.

T-9: A single agency should be established to plan and coordinate the efficient, economical movement of people and goods consistent with adopted regional and local growth management plans. The agency should be administered by a director appointed by the Governor and serving at his/her pleasure. An appointed commission should determine policy with regional input from citizens and guidance by the Legislature.

T-10: Effective citizen participation requires comprehensive and consistent communication between the governmental sponsor and its constituents. There should be

opportunities for public comment from the institution of the plan, consideration of alternatives, development of the project or program, and throughout implementation. State and regional plans and projects for managing congested major urban corridors should be integrated with local and regional growth management plans and coordinated with regional and local governments, employers, businesses, freight and public transportation agencies.

T-11: State transportation policy should promote development in centers, manage and reduce single occupant vehicle use on highway facilities and shift solo trips to alternative modes.

T-12: (From "Energy" positions) In the event that energy shortages force the imposition of a government administered allocation program, across-the-board cuts should be made in all areas of energy use. Following the initial cutback, highest priority should be given to life-supporting industries that produce essential goods. The private vehicle should receive lowest priority. (Allocation Program - 1976)

T-13: We support the transporting of freight via rail, including laws and subsidies to that effect in order to reduce the number and size of trucks on the freeways. We support this move for energy efficiency as well as safety reasons.

Natural Resources

ENERGY

POSITION IN BRIEF: 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.

BACKGROUND: Prior to 1975, when a study of "Energy" was adopted, action was based on the LWVUS position. In 1977 a state position on energy conservation was reached. This included conservation education, incentives for efficient uses of current energy sources and greater use of alternative sources. In the following years much action was taken.

The 1990 legislature passed the tough new energy conservation code that had been developed under a 1983 congressional mandate, becoming the first Northwest state to do so. New residences would be required to have more efficient windows and doors and more insulation in the walls, floors and ceilings. Builders of electrically heated homes would receive subsidies from utilities compensating them for the added costs of energy-saving features. The gas and electricity saved will be substantial, and in the case of electricity, the number of new power plants needed will be reduced.

In 1992 League members served on the Governor's Energy Strategy Commission. The state League, under contract with

the Department of Ecology, coordinated 14 public meetings around the state, providing citizens with an opportunity to review and comment on proposed legislation.

The League urged the Legislature to proceed with caution in exploring possible electricity deregulation in the 1997 and 1998 sessions. Although ultimately deregulation was not enacted in Washington, it did occur elsewhere, causing BPA and other utilities to cut investments in conservation and renewable energy. These utilities felt the need to reduce costs in anticipation of competition created by cheaper power from deregulated states. Citing support for renewable energy and conservation, League opposed these cuts.

In 1999 League supported bills clarifying the ability of utilities to offer low-income rate assistance and requiring fuel mix disclosure to customers. In 2000 League opposed legislation granting a sizable tax break to natural gas companies generating electricity. At the League's urging this bill was vetoed by the Governor. We successfully lobbied for a net metering bill allowing generators of small amounts of energy

from solar, wind or landfill generation to place excess power on their utilities' grid in exchange for credit towards future power use.

In 2001 the League supported legislation extending tax credits for renewable energy projects to smaller-scale systems and fuel cells. The League also supported a bill which: 1. Gives tax credits to utilities offering reduced rates to low-income households, 2. Requires state buildings and schools to audit energy and install energy efficiency measures, 3. Requires most electric utilities to offer customers a voluntary option to purchase renewable energy.

However, the League opposed the portion of this bill raising the siting threshold triggering regulatory control by the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council.

In 2005, the League was successful in lobbying for the passage of legislation which did the following:

- Authorized investment cost recovery incentives to support renewable energy projects. Individuals, businesses, or local governments who generate electricity, on their own property, with an anaerobic digester or a wind or solar energy system, may apply to their light and power provider for the incentive payment. (SB 5101)
- Reduced the business and occupation tax for Washington businesses that manufacture solar energy systems or the silicon components of these systems. This B & O tax exemption extends to the year 2014. (E2SSB 5111)
- Mandated that minimum standards and testing procedures be established for twelve electrical products that are not covered by federal law. (ESHB 1062)
- Authorized municipalities to conduct energy audits and implement cost-effective energy conservation measures across multiple governments, placed various aggregate biennial reporting requirements upon the cities, and enabled financing of conservation measures with bonds issued by Washington Economic Development Finance Authority (WEDFA).

In this era energy and climate change are closely connected, so see the section on climate change for additional history.

After unsuccessfully lobbying for many years for an energy portfolio standard, in 2006 the League helped to pass Initiative 937 which requires certain electric utilities with 25,000 or more customers to meet certain targets for energy conservation and use of renewable energy resources, as defined, including energy credits, or pay penalties. In 2006 the legislature passed a bill that gives tax exemptions for the sale of solar hot water equipment and for the labor for installing them.

In 2007 the legislature passed HB1929 authorizing cities and towns to use offset (or other means) to mitigate the environmental impacts (for example, greenhouse gas emissions) of operating the utilities: water, sewer, storm water, sewer water or solid waste. The bill also authorizes counties to mitigate the environment impacts of operating their utilities and to mitigate environmental impacts of conducting other ratepayer funded activities.

Since the 1977 energy study, extensive research has clearly shown that the earth's climate is warming and that a major cause of this warming is the increase of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. Conversion from use of fossil fuel to renewable energy sources would decrease the rate of increase of atmospheric carbon dioxide and therefore would decrease the rate of global warming. In the past decade, technologies have changed because of research and development, consumer demand, and government policies -- including biomass projects.

Local leagues were reviewing proposed biomass projects in their communities and a variety of proposed biomass legislation with some voicing their concerns about the technology and its impacts on the environment. As a result, in 2011-12, LWVWA studied alternatives to fossil fuels, called renewable energy, to consider the costs, capacity and impact of a wide array of renewable energy sources, including biomass projects. Included in the study were ways of delivering energy including green energy programs, the present electric grid, and the potential of the Smart Grid. New energy positions were adopted in 2013.

In 2011 an agreement was reached to shut down the Transalta Coal Plant, Washington's last remaining coal plant, and legislation was then passed in 2015 to achieve that goal. As of 2020 the first of the two plants will close and the second will close in 2025.

Since its passage in 2008, the Energy Independence Act (I-937) has spawned a rapid growth in solar and wind power in the State. There have been repeated attempts to reverse the legislation and the League spent much of its time in opposition to those attempts. In 2017 legislation was finally passed to continue to provide tax breaks to the third-party manufacturers of solar panels.

In 2015, Governor Inslee submitted what became the first of two attempts to legislate a carbon tax. Both attempts failed. The second initiative, I-732, also failed to pass a vote of the citizens.

In 2018 I-1631 proposed another carbon tax designating the revenue to specific categories of climate change mitigation, but this initiative also failed.

In 2019 the League lobbied for a marquee energy accomplishment for the state, the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA, SB 5116), which requires Washington's electric utilities to meet 100 percent of their retail electric load using non-emitting and renewable resources by January 1, 2045.

In 2020 progress was made in encouraging the development more renewable energy. SSB 6135 system reliability under the Clean Energy Transformation Act requires an annual assessment by the Department of Commerce and the Utilities and Transportation Commission on the adequacy of energy resources for reliability and sufficient capacity. ESHB 2248 equitable access to community solar projects. Community solar allows electricity customers to share in a

renewable solar project if investing in solar for their home is not efficient or feasible. The program encourages participation by lower income communities through incentive payments from the utility funded by tax credits. HB 2819 gave pumped energy storage statewide significance. The bill specifically initiates a proposed project near Goldendale for the John Day dam on the Columbia River. Pumped storage uses excess energy to move water to a higher elevation for later use in generating hydroelectric power. An environmental impact statement and community input is required.

Also in 2020, The League was represented on the Washington State Energy Strategy Advisory Committee as the Department of Commerce prepared the 2021 update to the state's Energy Strategy.

In 2021 the legislature recognized fuel cell vehicles as of now deserving commensurate encouragement as battery electric vehicles. SB 5000 hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle pilot providing a partial and temporary sales and use tax exemptions

for sales of new and used fuel-cell electric vehicles. Fuel cell electricity is attractive in vehicles requiring longer range and more power than practical with batteries. Washington has the potential to use some of our green electricity to generate green hydrogen. Hydrogen is also a medium of energy storage when our generation capacity exceeds our demand.

The clean energy Transformation Act (CETA) reduces carbon in our electricity generation plus the Climate Commitment Act and the Clean Fuels Act address largely transportation energy, leaving the next challenge in the third decade of the 21st century as reducing GHG emissions in energy for building construction and lifecycle operation. Besides its effect on climate change, reducing methane for heating and cooking will improve inside air quality. In 2022, the League supported bills to reduce GHG in the design of public facilities through life-cycle analysis and ensuring consideration of renewable energy systems in building design options including appliance standards. Another bill expanded options for community solar projects.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON ENERGY (1976-77, 2013): *The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:*

EN-1: In the event that energy shortages force the imposition of a government administered allocation program, across-the-board cuts should be made in all areas of energy use. Following the initial cutback, highest priority should be given to life-supporting industries that produce essential goods. The private vehicle should receive lowest priority. (Allocation Program - 1976)

EN-2: State government, through an intensive public education program, should articulate a new energy ethic based on conservation. Energy conservation methods to be encouraged should include promotion of: a) thermal efficiency in buildings and residences through building code provisions and fiscal incentives for weatherization; b) energy-efficient movement of people and goods through subsidies for public transportation, vehicle taxes related to energy consumption and strict enforcement of reduced speed limits; c) recycling; d) pricing policies which reward low use of energy and e) limits on non-essential uses of energy such as excessive outdoor lighting. (Conservation - 1976)

EN-3: Energy facility siting decisions should be made in conformance with a comprehensive, long-range state or regional energy plan. An adequate demonstration of the need for energy from a proposed new facility should be prerequisite for site approval. (Energy Facilities - 1977)

EN-4: A state energy policy should be formulated with particular regard to encouraging changes in lifestyle including changes in transportation and land-use patterns; maintaining human health and safety; preserving the environment and conserving natural resources. (Energy Policy - 1977)

EN-5: When an energy source is chosen, the efficiency of the source selected should be an important consideration. The League favors further research and development of renewable power sources such as solar, wind and tidal. Additionally, the League supports the production and use

of solar, wind and hydro power. Reliance on additional nuclear thermal plants as a major source must answer the public's concern about adequate and safe nuclear waste disposal. (Amended 2013)

EN-6: The state's short-term power needs should be met through implementation of a vigorous conservation program in which all energy users participate. If necessary to meet stated energy saving goals, elements of the program should be mandatory. The major emphasis of the program should be on positive conservation strategies such as tax incentives and assistance for other energy-saving improvements. The use of renewable energy systems such as solar, wind and recovery of energy from wastes should be actively encouraged. (Energy Sources - 1977. Amended 2013)

EN-7: The protection of the marine environment should be the prime consideration when decisions are made regarding the movement of crude oil into or through the state of Washington. Protection of land areas through which a pipeline might pass is also of concern. Meeting state and national needs for petroleum is important but not at the expense of the environment. The state should work closely with federal agencies and take other appropriate steps to ensure the protection of Washington waters against oil pollution. (Oil Transport - 1977)

EN-8: A single state energy agency should have the responsibility for coordinating and implementing the state's energy policy. The duties of the energy agency should include long-range planning, data collection and analysis and dissemination of the information to energy users. (State Agency - 1976)

EN-9: League members support the development and implementation of a smart grid with the active participation of consumers. (Renewable Energy - 2013)

EN-10: League members support a range of practical and currently available methods to conserve energy both in

their homes and when making transportation choices and to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. (Renewable Energy - 2013)

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Position in Brief: 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)

Background: In 1998 LWVUS published a Question & Answer (Q&A) document that stated that the climate scientists' premise that rapid increase in global warming gases over the last 200 years is due primarily to human activities, such as deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) for energy and transportation. Global warming was identified as a Level Two Legislative Priority with the 106th Congress (in 2000). LWVUS stated in 1998 and in the 2006-2008 Impact on Issues that "The U.S. government should move ahead immediately...on initiatives to reduce emissions of heat trapping gases; such actions will reduce the threat of global warming, combat air pollution, increase energy security and create new jobs" (<https://tinyurl.com/y65r9kb7>).

In 2007 LWVUS established a Climate Change Task Force in response to the Board designating climate change as its #2 priority for advocacy. The task force was charged with researching and writing substantive supporting materials for the LWVUS action on climate change and for use, as desired, by local and state leagues. In addition, the task force provided research and responses to specific issues, including questions arising with federal climate change legislation.

LWVWA took steps consistent with LWVUS positions in 2000 for the purpose of bringing Climate Change issues to members, other citizens and legislators' attention for action. League members recognized that this topic is inextricably linked with energy, water, transportation, forests, clean air and other issues on which the League has positions and takes action. LWVWA has joined local and regional groups with similar goals. This collaboration has resulted in a number of climate change legislative successes in Washington to include:

2002—Washington Climate and Rural Energy Development Center established.

2003—The Biodiesel Fuel Package provided tax incentives for farmers to grow biodiesel crops and for entrepreneurs to process and distribute biodiesel fuels throughout the state. A neighborhood electric vehicles law provided a more efficient, cleaner mode of travel for the multitudinous short trips taken daily.

2004—League members participated in a stakeholder process that culminated in a carbon dioxide (CO₂) mitigation bill for all new power plants over 25 megawatts

2005—A Clean Cars bill, originally passed in California, requiring all cars to emit less CO₂ after 2008. Similar bills have now passed in 12 states. Auto industries sued to prevent this bill from becoming law, but lost in 2007; however, the EPA has not authorized CA or any state to enforce this stricter air pollution statute. The Green Buildings law requires all future

state buildings to be more efficient in the use of water, energy and materials.

A tax incentive for clean and alternative fuel vehicles also passed in 2005.

2006—Laws were enacted to require all diesel fuel and gasoline sold in WA to contain between 2% and 2 1/2% biofuel content by 2009.

2007—Legislation passed in 2007 to mitigate the impacts of climate change through emissions reduction and clean energy usage with the following goals set for the state:

- By 2020, reduce emissions from climate pollution to 1990 levels
- By 2020, triple the number of 2004's clean energy jobs bringing total to 25,000
- By 2035, reduce emissions from climate pollution to 25% below 1990 levels
- By 2050, reduce emissions from climate pollution to 50% below 1990 levels

This law requires several emissions reduction mechanisms to be established: a load-based cap and trade system; regulations and incentives for electric utilities; methods to increase use of landfill gas and geothermal resources; a process to replace old power plants with cleaner technologies; and an emissions performance standard (EPS) that goes into effect on July 1, 2008 limiting pollution from power plants to 1100 lbs. per megawatt hour (achievable now) and ramps up the standard to further reduce the pounds per megawatt hour in 2013. State legislation nationwide to reduce greenhouse gas pollution has steadily strengthened over the last five years. League members' efforts to educate the public and legislators are an integral part of this change in awareness and action in Washington. The decision of the 2008 LWVUS Convention committee to include a plenary panel on climate change reflects the growing concern with this issue.

2019—the Legislature passed an unprecedented amount of climate legislation including:

- A 100% Clean Energy bill, the strongest clean energy requirement in the nation, transitioning the state's electrical grid off coal by 2025, carbon neutral by 2030, and completely free of fossil fuels by 2045. The bill also includes innovative approaches to protect low-income communities and ties clean energy incentives to strong labor standards.

- The Clean Buildings Standards bill, establishing conservation and efficiency standards and electric vehicle charging readiness in new buildings.
- The Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions bill, phasing out super pollutant hydrofluorocarbons.
- The Advancing Green Transportation bill, investing in clean transportation including electric vehicle incentives and transit electrification.
- The Appliance Efficiency Standards bill, setting energy and water efficiency standards for appliances sold in Washington.
- The Solar Fairness Act, protecting net metering, utility customers' ability to sell the solar energy they produce back to their utility.

After using various natural resource positions for a number of years, LWVUS adopted a comprehensive and specific Climate Change position in 2019.

2020 —The legislature made significant updates to policies and regulations this year.

Climate Pollution Reductions (HB 2311) updates the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions limits passed in 2007 for consistency with recent climate science as recommended by the Department of Ecology. This bill provides the basis for future legislation on clean fuels, a price on carbon, and other specific policies.

The sustainable farms and fields grant program (SB 5947). This allows the State Conservation Commission to distribute funds to local conservation districts to support voluntary sustainable farming projects.

The Clean Car bill (SB 5811) directs the Department of Ecology to adopt rules to implement the motor vehicle emissions standards of California, including the zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) program.

Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resilience (HB 2405 C-PACER) facilitates a public-private partnership for financing energy efficiency retrofits and new construction.

2021—Most notable progress was passage of a clean fuels bill, HB 1091, and a cap and trade and invest bill, SB 5126. Both were controversial, experienced extensive amending, and partial vetoes by the governor.

The clean fuels bill was intended to not only reduce greenhouse gas release and improve air quality, but also to incentivize the in-state biofuels industry. In this context clean fuels includes electricity. Objections primarily focused on potential increases in fuel costs with conflicting data presented during hearings. Both chambers adopted amendments to gather sufficient legislator support, and one amendment required implementation of an auto fuel tax in

the separate transportation package to proceed with the clean fuel regulations. The governor vetoed this section.

The cap and trade and invest bill sets caps on carbon dioxide that apply to entities releasing more than 25,000 metric tons of carbon equivalent annually. Credits allocated to these entities can be applied against releases over the cap and can be purchased by the heaviest polluters, but a declining schedule of credit distribution forces down releases over time. The bill also permits investing in projects or purchasing offsets for 6% to 8% of a polluting entity's releases as mitigation. The timeline for implementation is very detailed.

The governor also vetoed the auto fuel tax implementation provision in this bill, which was negotiated to attract sufficient votes. During the session, cap and trade was in competition with a carbon tax and green financing bill. This bill (SB 5373) would impose a per-ton carbon tax, indexed for inflation, and use the revenue stream to pay off the bonds. The bonds would fund projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the resilience of Washington's natural resources against the impacts of climate change. This approach experienced less legislator support and did not move out of committee.

Other bills that passed in 2021:

SB 5192 Supporting access to electric vehicle supply equipment, to increase public access to electric vehicle charging stations and standardize the features.

HB 1287 Preparedness for a zero-emissions transportation future requires utilities to plan for additional building codes to support the anticipated increase in zero-emission vehicles and requires the state to maintain publicly available information and locations of vehicle charging and refueling infrastructure.

HB 1050 Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from hydrofluorocarbons to transition away from the working fluids in air conditioning and heat pump systems that are far more powerful greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide.

SB 5141 The HEAL Act, implements the recommendations of the Environmental Justice Task Force, requiring state agencies to do more to protect residents of Washington's most-polluted places.

In addition to the 2022 Energy bills that made progress on climate change, the legislature updated Climate Commitment Act to set schedules for creating and assigning allowances to energy users, and further specified business-market competitive sensitive information that cannot be disclosed. Also bills passed to reduce methane generation in landfills, and to redirect any methane captured to useful purposes. Methane leakage is a significant source of this powerful GHG in the atmosphere, so emphasis on this in the near term is one of the pathways to achieving our state climate goals.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (January 2019): *The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:*

Climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and our planet.

An interrelated approach to combating climate change—including through energy conservation, air pollution controls, building resilience, and promotion of renewable resources—is necessary to protect public health and defend the overall

integrity of the global ecosystem. The League 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. Individuals, communities, and governments must continue to address this issue, while considering the ramifications of their decision, at all levels—local, state, regional, national, and global.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

POSITION IN BRIEF: *Action to obtain coordinated planning and ensures environmental quality in the use of water, air and land resources.*

BACKGROUND: State action on natural resources during the '50s and '60s was based on LWVUS positions. "Conservation: A Study of Water Resources" was the first study item (1956). A Task Force was formed by the Leagues of the Columbia River Basin: Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. In 1959, the Task Force published *The Great River of the West* that was used as a study resource. From this study came a position that supported an interstate compact.

Between 1967 and 1977 League studied state and regional agencies involved in environmental planning and arrived at a position that was the basis for actions supporting environmental quality.

In 1977 a new water study was adopted that included a survey of water uses, an explanation of the interrelationship of state and federal water regulations and agencies, and an examination of Washington state water rights. Two publications were produced: *Water Management* and *Water Rights*.

During the 1978 and 1979 meetings of the Columbia River Task Force, it became apparent that many similarities existed among the four states in the use and management of the water resources of the Columbia River. Action was taken at the 1979 convention to strengthen the Columbia River Task Force due to the continuing interstate conflicts and issues. In 1980 after state board concurrence, a position was announced that called for coordinated management at all three levels of government—federal, state and local—and for comprehensive planning for sound basin development. Citizen participation was called for in this position. In June 1985 a regional conference on ground water was held in Tacoma.

In 1989 a new structure was established for regular cooperation. The three state leagues (Oregon, Idaho and Washington) will meet annually at the LWVUS convention or council to determine regional issues. The first such meeting was in the spring of 1989.

Another important addition to League's environmental positions occurred at the 1981 convention when positions of the Puget Sound Leagues of Women Voters were adopted and incorporated into state positions. These include: Agricultural Lands; Parks, Open Spaces and Green Belts; the Nisqually Delta; and new statements on air quality, planning and land use.

This broad range of positions includes nearly every aspect of air, land and water resources. Following are highlights of League action in these areas:

Air Quality: Lobbying continued to gain industrial compliance with CO2 emission standards. There are no national CO2 emission standards. The state CO2 standards for new energy facilities were legislated in 2004. Testimony was given at EPA regional hearings on proposed standards for arsenic emissions. The ASARCO smelter, a target for arsenic emission controls before a standard was adopted, closed in 1985. League supported Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance in Seattle and Spokane. See Energy background section for updates.

Columbia River Task Force: Leagues of Women Voters of Washington, Oregon and Idaho took part in the Columbia River Treaty Review process from 2012-2013. The Columbia River Treaty between the US and Canada for the cooperative development and operation of the water resources of the Columbia River for the benefit of both countries had been ratified by the US Senate in 1964. On its 50th Anniversary, the US Entity, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bonneville Power Administration, led public information meetings in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, and solicited comments that led to a compiled US Entity Regional Recommendation for the Future of the Columbia River Treaty after 2024, released December 13, 2013, to the US Department of State. LWVWA joined others in advocating for a revised modernized treaty adding an "Ecosystem Function" goal to the original treaty goals of flood control and maximizing hydropower generation. LWVWA also joined the US Non-Profit Organizations and Tribal Caucus to follow and advise in the process up to and through the Columbia River Treaty negotiations between the US State Department and the Canadian Foreign Ministry.

Land Use: Revisions to the State Environmental Policy Act were passed by the legislature in 1982, followed by development of implementing rules to be in effect by 1984. League participated in each phase, calling for early and meaningful citizen input. In 1984, we co-sponsored a public information seminar on the new rules.

In 1990 and 1991 LWVWA convened a broad-based group of business, environmental, government, and community leaders who successfully proposed amendments that

influenced the development of the 1990-91 growth management legislation. Since that time, we have lobbied vigorously against weakening amendments and for full funding of the Growth Management Act (GMA).

In the fall of 1992, LWVWA co-sponsored a major conference on the interface between the Growth Management Act and the State Environmental Policy Act. In 1992 and 1993, LWVWA provided advice, assistance and support to local Leagues monitoring and shaping action by their local governments in planning under the Growth Management Act.

In 1995 several amendments to GMA were adopted. The land use permit process was streamlined; environmental and land use laws were consolidated. Best Available Science requirement was added to the development of critical areas ordinances. Goals and policies of Shoreline Management Act were added as the fourteenth goal of the GMA. League was actively involved in the Land Use Commission, reviewing and supporting these proposed changes.

Despite these changes, in 1995 the Legislature enacted I-164 into law. Proponents of I-164, an initiative to the Legislature, had claimed it was needed to protect the property rights of citizens whose property lost value through the effects of regulation. League and many others opposed this initiative because it would have severely restricted governments' ability to regulate land use by requiring governments to pay for ANY reduction in property value brought about by regulation, no matter how beneficial the regulation to the community. Believing that the public should have a right to vote on this measure, League joined with a variety of groups to file Referendum 48, and gathered sufficient signatures to place the measure on the November 1995 ballot. League then campaigned actively against the measure and it was soundly defeated.

During the latter part of the 1990's League fought efforts to weaken the Growth Management Act while supporting practical modifications to make it more workable. In 1997 League sponsored a program of growth management awards to bring public recognition to many successful actions taken by local officials and citizens to implement GMA.

At its convention in 2005 LWVWA adopted a one-year study of growth management in Washington State. In August 2006 this study produced the report, *The Growth Management Act of Washington State: Successes and Challenges*. The report is a guide to the Growth Management Act, what it is and how it works, a retrospective look at some of its history, an examination of some current issues, and a look forward. This report was intended for use in educating League members and the public about growth management issues in Washington.

In November 2006 another property rights initiative was on the ballot. LWVWA opposed I-933 for reasons similar to its opposition to I-164 and Referendum 48 in 1995. LWVWA was part of a large coalition that resoundingly defeated I-933.

Revisions to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Washington Administrative Code (WAC) implementing rules

were required by bills passed by the legislature in 2012 and 2014.

The Department of Ecology convened a SEPA Rulemaking Advisory Committee, League of Women Voters Washington was represented. Rule changes were adopted by Ecology in Dec. 2012, Dec. 2013 and June 2016.

Rules relating to WAC 197-11 included: Use of SEPA documents, Environmental checklist items, Cultural Resources, Thresholds for Categorical Exemptions for fully planning GMA communities, and Notice of Action taken. The exemption thresholds from SEPA were increased for mixed use development, commercial development, agricultural structures, parking lots, excavations and fills, and residential dwellings.

The SEPA Rulemaking Advisory Committee was reconvened in 2015 to address a legislative bill directing WAC changes to local government owned structurally deficient bridges and to certain transportation issues raised by City of Seattle. The rule relating to structurally deficient bridges was adopted by Ecology in June 2016.

Shorelines: During 1983-84 League members assisted the Department of Natural Resources in their review and revision of harbor area and aquatic lands management policies. In 1983 the League won a contract with Washington Department of Ecology to assess statewide public perception of the ten-year old Shoreline Management Act (SMA) via a telephone survey of state citizens. During the 1995 legislative session, LWV worked with the Governor's Task Force on Regulatory Reform to ensure that the SMA was not weakened. In 1999-2000, the Department of Ecology sought comments on major revisions to the Master Program Guidelines of the SMA. These guidelines are the basis for over 250 city and county shoreline master programs that affect streams over 20 cubic feet per second, marine waters, lakes over 20 acres in size, and associated wetlands. In December 2000, the rules were adopted by Ecology and appealed to the State Shoreline Hearings Board by business and development interests. League joined with other organizations and private individuals under the leadership and legal representation of Washington Environmental Council (WEC) as interveners in the lawsuit. In 2000-2001, League supported continuation of the state's aquatic reserve system established in 1971 to protect aquatic lands that have special educational, scientific or environmental importance.

Amendments to the Shoreline Management Act were proposed in 2017 by the Department of Ecology that would have weakened the important "no net loss" provision governing the adoption by Ecology of Shoreline Master Programs. League testified at the public hearing and signed a group letter that successfully opposed the weakening of this provision. In 2018, during the DOE update hearings on the Guidelines, League advocated for adding Climate Change Impacts to the SMA including Sea Level Rise. In 2019, League supported the recommendations of the Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force convened by the Governor. Five bills passed that will reduce threats to endangered Orcas. At the

2019 LWVWA Convention, members adopted a proposal for a new two-year study on current shoreline conditions, projections and issues.

The 2021 Legislature enacted an important bill SB5273 concerning replacement of shoreline armoring. Shoreline armoring projects (bulkheads or related for bank protection) are subject to various environmental regulations and may require permits such as Substantial Development Permits issued under Shoreline Management Act or Hydraulic Project Approvals issued by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. League members have been involved in supporting shoreline protection both statewide and in local Shoreline Master Programs supporting the use of least impacting technically feasible bank protection alternatives for protection of fish life when replacing residential marine shoreline stabilization or armoring. The bill specified a hard armor should be proposed only after considering site characteristics including threat to major improvements, wave energy, and other facts in an alternative analysis. This is the order of preference: remove the structure and restore the beach; remove the structure and restore native vegetation; remove the structure and control upland drainage; remove the structure and replace it with a soft structure constructed of natural materials and removing the structure and replacing with hard structure located farther landward, and finally hard structure in existing location. *Feasible* means the technique is available and capable of installation after taking into consideration: cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes.

In 2021, the housing element required in comprehensive plans was expanded via HB 1220 to assure that the planning includes housing for all of the population, including low-income, severely low-income and those expected to need shelter. In 2022, a variety of bills were introduced to assure additional housing via ADUs, but none passed. Also in 2022 a high priority of League was to get HB 1099 passed, which would have added a goal of environmental resiliency to the listed goals of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and to the requirements of local comprehensive plans. HB 1099 did not pass by the session cut-off, in spite of having a conference committee agreement.

Several bills the League supported were passed, enacting technical changes in the GMA. The most significant of these were a requirement to consult with tribes in development of comprehensive plans and a dispute resolution process; removal of archaic provisions related to unincorporated area community council authority; and changes in the timelines for comprehensive planning.

Water: Water for human consumption, irrigation, industry, and wildlife has been scarce in some regions for many decades. With increasing pressure from population growth and climate change, scarcity is emerging in most areas of the state. From time to time, The LWVWA has been represented on state policy committees for water supply and quality including, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Ecology Water Resources Advisory Committee, and the Department of Health Water Supply

Advisory Committee. In the Yakima River basin, the LWVWA participated in two 1982 grant projects—water rights adjudication information workshops and overall basin resource enhancement. In 1983 public attention began to focus on Puget Sound when the legislature established the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority. A conference in September 1983, including the LWVWA as a co-sponsor, addressed many issues about the health of Puget Sound. The LWVWA joined in one citizen action opposing EPA-granted waivers to municipalities from secondary water treatment requirements.

A drought in 1987-88 and a drop in the snowpack gave notice that water resources, so long considered plentiful in the state, were threatened. Three measures became law: Safe Drinking Water, Waterfront Sewer Systems, and Water Use Efficiency. The last measure required new construction and remodeling to use more efficient plumbing fixtures starting in July 1991 and raised the requirement beginning July 1993, to 1.6 gal/flush toilets and 2.5 gal/min faucet and showerhead flows. The Department of Ecology was directed to develop an efficient water use public education program.

A constitutional amendment on water conservation was passed by the voters in November 1989. Local governments were permitted to finance from public money or credits derived from the sale of water, the acquisition by private persons of water conservation materials and equipment. No tax dollars were used and the program was limited to the purchase and installation of cost effective equipment, plumbing fixtures and systems.

At the League Convention in May 1989, a two-year study of water use was passed. This resulted in a new position on “Water Use Efficiency” in 1991.

In 1991 LWVWA received a grant from the LWVUS and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a ground water project that included workshops in Thurston County as part of The National Conference on Aquifer and Well-Head Protection. This project also saw publication of *Speaking of Ground Water*.

In 1993 LWVWA and several local Leagues participated in an EPA sponsored conference on ground water held in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Several State Supreme Court cases demonstrated the inadequacy of current state water policy to address the complex issues of growing communities and the increasing demand for out of stream water use while maintaining in-stream flows for the needs of endangered fish and other natural system needs. Summer droughts and record low water levels on both Eastside and Westside rivers of the state as well as the uncertainties of climate change have intensified these issues. The Governor committed the office to addressing the water problems in the state, focusing on in-stream flows, growing communities, relinquishment and water storage. The 2001 legislative session began this effort with the passage of the Omnibus Water Bill.

In 1999 the LWVWA opposed Initiative 696, a ban on all commercial net, troll, and trawl fishing in Washington state fresh and marine waters, except tribal fisheries conducted

under a valid treaty right. This initiative did not take a comprehensive approach, singling out non-tribal commercial fisherman and harvest issues, and had little support from any group except sports fishermen. In 2018, LWVWA supported the successful bill to prevent new, renewing or extending leases on net pens for nonnative finfish in marine aquaculture.

Climate-change related successive years of increasing summer droughts and winter flooding increased concerns over the state's water resources and their management. In 2006, because of recurrent years of drought, DOE was charged to find new water supplies. To solve the ongoing litigation in the Yakima River basin between irrigators and the Yakama Tribe over declining water availability for competing crops and fish, the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan was developed by a Workgroup consisting of Irrigation Districts, the Yakama Tribe, state and federal resource agencies, local entities, and one environmental group. To ensure water was available for irrigators and development near Leavenworth, the Icicle Workgroup was formed to develop a plan to divert water from and build new dams on lakes in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness that flow into Icicle Creek, a tributary of the Wenatchee River.

As water scarcity grows in concern, interest in mitigation methods has increased including water reuse in which waste water is treated to a potable level and used for non-potable benefits such as irrigation and wetland recharge. In 2011 the LWV of Seattle released a Reclaimed Water Review that covered wastewater treatment, reclaimed water standards applications.

Water is managed by the state Department of Ecology Water Resource program and drinking water managed by the state Department of Health. Local Counties control land use and development under the Growth Management Act, which stipulates that water must be available for rural development to proceed. Development has proceeded with the use of permit exempt well allowing up to 5000 gallons a day without metering. Two Washington Supreme Court decisions challenged this practice: the Swinomish decision ruled DOE couldn't amend in-stream flow rules to allocate more out-of-stream water; the Hirst decision ruled that local governments must protect water resources as a part of their land use planning, which restricted the use of permit exempt wells for further rural development.

In the 2015 legislative session the League supported a bill giving property owners alternative methods to obtain water, and a bill regarding water banking best practices; both bills passed. In the 2016 session, the LWVWA supported bills regarding water banking transparency and a study of water storage to mitigate Skagit basin development that relied on permit exempt wells. In the 2017 session, the LWVWA opposed a bill to repeal the Hirst decision, and supported compromise efforts that would have given relief to homeowners while protecting tribal and senior water right holders, and in-stream flows. No compromise was reached, and the Senate decided to hold up the Capitol budget without a "Hirst fix." In the 2018 session, the Legislature passed the

Streamflow Restoration Act that creates requirements for Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIA) planning to maintain stream flows while proceeding with development using new permit exempt wells. The LWVWA did not support this bill because we did not believe the requirements will achieve the results desired for in-stream flows.

The LWVWA also supported bills in the 2018 session that constrained the use of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemical constituents in fire suppression foams and in fast food wrappers because these chemicals are likely affecting health and are finding their way into our water supply. During the 2019 session, the League supported bills to reduce pollutants that could affect freshwater purity covering: voluntary cleanup of toxic sites, identification of toxic constituents in manufactured products, and prohibiting fracking in Washington, a fossil fuel extraction technique that has degraded water quality in some areas.

Forests: Delegates to the 1999 State Convention adopted the study, "Washington's Dynamic Forests: A Study of Forests and Forest Issues, Phase II, which examined pressures on Washington State forests that diminish our ability to pass on to future generations all the benefits of healthy forest ecosystems.

This portion of the consensus was sent as an advisory letter to the LWVUS Trade Taskforce:

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) must not be given authority to supersede our national or state priorities, especially legally enacted environmental protections.
- Trade agreements must go beyond economics to include conservation, environmental protection, impact on climate change, sustainable forest management, endangered species and wildlife habitat protection.
- An appeals process should be available and transparent.

The LWVWA supported the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance campaign to protect forests by purchasing (July 1999) 25,000 acres of mostly roadless virgin forestland in the Loomis State Forest located in North Central Washington. The 134,000-acre Loomis State Forest provides important wildlife habitat for lynx, grizzly, marten, fisher, wolverine, and other imperiled species.

By the 2000's the issue of climate change and the related increase in summer draughts, higher temperatures, wildfires and pest infestation became a major concern for the state. Extensive forest wildfires in eastern Washington in the summers of 2014 and 2015 overwhelmed the Department of Natural Resources firefighting manpower, equipment and financial resources. In the 2016 Legislative Session, LWVWA supported legislation increasing firefighting manpower, training and equipment. In the 2017 session, LWVWA supported legislation authorizing the Department of Natural Resources to develop a list of at risk forests for forest health treatments including prescribed fire, thinning and other measures. These measures passed with bipartisan support. Concerns about climate change and CO2 emissions increased efforts to preserve forests as carbon sinks, but thinning reduces forest biomass, and wildfires create increased CO2 emissions.

In the 2022 legislative session, the LWVWA supported SB 5619 (Conserving and restoring kelp forests and eelgrass meadows in Washington). Both native and non-native types of eelgrass are essential for restoring Puget Sound and Coastal Washington. The LWVWA supported the amended version which included both types. The LWVWA originally opposed SB 5961 (Incentivizing the use of biochar in government contracts) due to concern that this bill might allow harvesting trees to supply feedstock for a pilot project. The bill was amended to include language “Biochar must be derived from biomass waste materials including forest, agricultural, yard, urban wood, food, and biosolid residuals.”

The WA State Supreme Court decision on 7/21/22, *Conservation Northwest v Commissioner of Public Lands* affirms the state’s authority to manage forestlands for public benefit. This clarity from the court opens the door for the state to reprioritize other important values of forests in its management decisions, rather than just maximizing revenue from logging. It’s now up to the DNR, its leadership, and state legislature to determine how to best balance these public benefits for all Washingtonians.

In May 2023, the LWVWA adopted a resolution to protect mature forests on public lands in Washington. Based on the resolution, each state legislator, Governor Inslee, Lands Commissioner Franz, and the Regents of UW and WSU were contacted and requested to implement an immediate moratorium on any further commercial harvest of mature forests on public lands in Washington State.

In addition the resolution supports policy that maintains mature forests on public lands by calling for:

- Acquisition of replacement land for the trusts, to maintain or expand the state trust land base with new land managed as working forests.
- Climate-smart forest management on replacement lands for more carbon sequestration and timber production.
- Compensation to trust land beneficiaries to ensure essential local services are maintained.

Conservation Districts: In 2011, the League studied the Washington State Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts, non-regulatory local government entities that work with landowners to help them protect water quality, improve fish and wildlife habitat and resource conservation, while sustaining the vital agricultural community. The study considered the process of electing the Conservation District supervisors, the history, funding, and the structure of the commission and districts.

Shoreline Management: 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.

State Action on National Issues affecting state natural resource management has included support for reauthorization of the Clean Air and Water Acts, continued Superfund authorization and appropriations and reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act to protect funding for local shorelines programs. We also testified for passage of the Washington Wilderness Act and for establishment of a Columbia Gorge Scenic Area with National Forest Service management authority. Delegates to state convention in 1997 adopted a new study of forest issues in Washington, reviewing current forestry plans and practices as governed by state and county regulations.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

Agricultural Lands (1981)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

AL-1: A flexible combination of governmental programs to prevent a non-reversible alteration to lands with prime or productive soils.

AL-2: The principal use of these lands for food production with highest consideration given to the preservation of the most productive soils, agriculture and related industries.

AL-3: Policies and programs that recognize the value of private and public land ownership.

Air Quality (1971)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

AQ-1: Coordinated action by all levels of government to control, limit and reduce air pollution.

AQ-2: Efforts to continue to make the public aware of the dangers of air pollution in order to gain broad support for efforts to reduce pollution.

AQ-3: Establishment of minimum federal standards with state and regional authority to set more stringent standards.

AQ-4: States to have the primary responsibility for development of regulations. This would not preclude establishment of more restrictive regulations by regional or local authorities.

AQ-5: Regional authorities to function as primary enforcement agencies. Enforcement of regulations relating to mobile sources, such as vehicles, should be the responsibility of the state. If enforcement at any level is unsuccessful, it should be mandatory that another level assumes the responsibility.

AQ-6: A single state agency to have responsibility for coordination of efforts to control all forms of environmental pollution including air, land and water.

AQ-7: Determination of regional authority boundaries primarily by weather patterns and topography and secondarily by political considerations such as boundaries of existing governmental units.

AQ-8: State authority to institute emergency air pollution control measures in times of air episode conditions.

Columbia River Task Force (1980)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

CR-1: In order to meet present and future water needs within the Columbia River Basin, comprehensive basin-wide planning must occur for optimum utilization, conservation, development and management of water resources. Machinery is needed to provide coordinated planning, administration and conflict resolution among the federal, state and other agencies. Procedures should be established to provide information and citizen participation in policy decisions affecting water resource development. The federal government has a necessary role in financing water resource development but state and local governments as well as private users should share in these costs as far as possible based on benefits received and ability to pay.

(Regional Position) The League of Women Voters of Idaho, (Montana,) Oregon and Washington believe that:

CR-2: Wise planning for the use of water in the Columbia River Basin requires an inventory of the basin water resources. This inventory should include water-related information such as ground and surface water sources, viable water rights, current use and projected future needs. This information should be readily available to concerned agencies and the general public.

CR-3: Minimum stream flows should be established as a public right and maintained on all streams in the Columbia River Basin and all other river basins in the state.

Conservation Districts (2012)

The League of Women Voters of Washington

CD-1: Believes that Conservation Districts have a unique role with landowners to encourage conservation of all resources and the League supports that independent role.

CD-2: Supports any independent group, separate from the state regulatory departments, which supports and encourages landowners' conservation work and assists landowners' efforts to develop sustainable business practices.

Land Use (1968, 1969-73)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

LU-1: The effect on environmental quality must always be considered whenever state and local governments and their agencies make decisions. It should be mandatory that governmental bodies prepare and publicize environmental impact statements for all land use decisions. (1970)

LU-2: All known factors should be considered in making land use decisions and first consideration should be given to the effect on natural elements. Those activities that are dependent upon natural elements must be balanced with the needs of people including recreation, employment, food, shelter, waste disposal, transportation, aesthetics and economics. Uniqueness or scarcity, importance to the community as a whole, promotion of health, safety and welfare as well as the irreversibility of the decisions should be considered in resolving conflicts in each case. (1973)

LU-2a: Local land use plans must be comprehensive and should consist of policies, goals, and a current inventory of pertinent planning elements. All local governments should be required to have a valid land use plan and to regulate land use consistent with such a plan. Provisions should be made for another agency to prepare plans for governments that are unable or unwilling to do so. Exceptions to some planning requirements should have to be substantiated by the responsible government and granted conditionally and for cause. (Local Planning 1973)

LU-3: A comprehensive statewide land use plan must address urban growth as well as long-range land use goals, policies and guidelines. All decisions made by other state agencies should be consistent with this plan. Individual citizens and representatives from local and regional governmental bodies should participate in the formulation of the state land use plan. Planning should be coordinated and interdisciplinary in nature. The state should have the authority to designate areas of critical concern and require that the use of such areas conform to statewide guidelines. (State Planning 1972 - 1973)

LU-4: Uniform guidelines and procedures should be established at the state level for local planning and implementation. State planning assistance to local governments should include information services, technical assistance and adequate financial resources. (State-Local Planning 1972 - 1973)

LU-5: Regional authorities within the state are useful in resolving problems, which transcend the boundaries of smaller jurisdictions. To be effective, regional authorities should have the ability to resolve conflicts among jurisdictions and implement plans of regional scope. Regional authorities should involve all levels of

government with responsibilities clearly defined. All governments and groups involved must cooperate to resolve conflicts and eliminate inconsistent policies, unnecessary duplication, wasted resources and irrevocable decisions on a patchwork basis. Planning and enforcement should be the responsibility of the level or levels of government that can do so most effectively in each case. (Regionalism and Inter-Local Cooperation 1968, Reworded and amended 1972)

LU-6: The state should have one uniform code for planning and land use decisions. The code should be consistent yet allow flexibility to meet unique decisions and should provide for due process with the right to appeal. (State Planning Law 1973)

LU-7: Tax policies should not be contrary to land use policies. (Tax Policies 1973)

LU-8: The public should be involved at all stages of the planning process but most importantly in setting policies and selecting goals. Participation should be continuing and representative of the community as a whole. (Citizen Participation 1973)

LU-9: Effective land use management requires adequate financing, involvement of professional planners and increased public information. (Funding 1968)

Nisqually Delta (1981)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

ND-1: Policies and procedures to preserve a natural estuarine environment for the Nisqually Delta should be supported.

ND-2: Any land or water uses which affect the Delta should be compatible in type and intensity with its ecological balance.

ND-3: Changes to the ecosystem of the Nisqually River basin, Delta and Nisqually Reach should be made only after their effect upon the Delta is considered.

ND-4: The state should assume primary responsibility for developing management goals and strategies for this area of statewide concern.

ND-5: Priority must be given to implementation of a comprehensive, region-wide plan for the management of the area. Any mechanism for planning, management and enforcement should recognize natural values over economic interests, long term effects over short term interests and statewide over local interests.

Parks, Open Spaces and Green Belts (1981)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

PO-1: Comprehensive planning, acquisition, development and preservation of parks, open spaces and green belts both public and private, to provide a wide variety of facilities for all age groups.

PO-2: Increased coordination among departments and all units of government involved as essential for economy, efficiency and effective implementation of open space programs.

PO-3: Citizen information, education, and participation in city, county and regional park and open space programs to ensure that present and future needs are met.

PO-4: Priorities for open space that are based upon the character and needs of the population. Land should be acquired now in developed areas and reserved in undeveloped areas for future growth. Natural topography should be utilized wherever possible as buffer zones between development, i.e., river valleys, flood plains, slide and steep slopes.

Water Management (1979, 1991, 2003)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

WR-1: Strict enforcement of laws affecting water quality and quantity management in Washington State. Enforcement requires emphasis upon cooperation and coordination among the many agencies as well as funding levels adequate to accomplish effective controls. Water claims under the jurisdiction of the State of Washington should be quantified. Water quality and water quantity programs should be integrated.

WR-2: The League of Women Voters of Washington believes:

- Water use efficiency practices are essential to maintain state water resources.
- Differential rates, technical assistance, and education are the most effective ways to achieve municipal and industrial water use efficiency.
- Regulation, technical assistance, and education are the most effective ways to achieve agricultural water use efficiency.
- Minimum stream flows should be established as a public right and maintained on all streams in the Columbia River Basin and all other river basins in the state.

Forests (1999, 2001)

The League of Women Voters of Washington finds:

FO-1: That all benefits of the forests—ecological, human and economic—are inextricably interconnected. Healthy forests are essential to habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life, to the hydrologic cycle, and to carbon storage to mitigate global warming. In addition, healthy forests are essential to a forest products industry with the jobs and goods they provide, and to the economic and aesthetic values of their recreational opportunities.

Therefore,

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

FO-2: Laws and policies to insure that forest management (for timber extraction, recreation or any other activity) is carried out in a manner that will sustain healthy forests, streams and habitats.

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that the following are essential elements of an adequate forest practices policy:

FO-3: The public must be informed and involved in the decision-making process in the development of regulations. There must be adequate public notice of forest practices permit applications, hearings, meetings and proposed actions. Public review and comment at each phase of policy and regulation development should be required. Citizens and stakeholders must be represented on the decision-making bodies.

FO-4: There must be authority and funding for enforcement of regulations. Existing land use and forest practices regulations must be monitored and enforced and should be responsive to changing scientific knowledge. There must be coordination of regulations for public and private lands among governmental entities.

FO-5: Riparian zones are an integral part of the forest ecosystem and must be regulated adequately to protect the streams and the wildlife dependent upon the streams.

FO-5: Education should be made available to timber owners on scientifically sound forest practices with the establishment of a small landowners' agency for this purpose.

FO-6: Environmental values of the lands proposed for trade must be considered before the economic values. Trained appraisers, with public oversight, must be used. The right of appeal must be available to the public.

FO-7: Full accounting of all costs, including cumulative ecological impacts, of timber harvests and other forest uses must be considered in forest activity decisions.

FO-8: Forest management must be responsive to scientific research and knowledge and should include:

- mapping, classification and protection of all streams,
- more and better data—including total watershed analysis,
- evaluation of cumulative effects of various activities in the forest in the consideration of individual forest practice permits, and
- planning for sustainability of forest ecosystems.

FO-9: The State should consider ecological protections the most important factor in deciding which activities to allow on state forest lands.

FO-10: Motorized activities should be restricted and in separate areas from non-motorized activities.

FO-11: Forest roads must be built, maintained and decommissioned to have the least impact on the forest ecosystems. Some areas on state lands should be roadless.

FO-12: Educate consumers about the human and ecological values of our forests as well as the opportunities and benefits of more efficient use of forest products, recycling and the use of alternatives to wood.

FO-13: Fund independent scientific research that would include improved forest practices and ecologically sound alternatives to the use of wood.

FO-14: Tax benefits and compensation should be considered to encourage small landowners to manage their forests in an ecologically sustainable manner.

FO-15: Washington schools must be fully funded with less reliance on timber harvests.

FO-16: Trust lands should remain in public ownership.

Shoreline Management (2023)

The League of Women Voter of Washington finds:

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.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

POSITION IN BRIEF: 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 waste produced, including toxics in the home.

BACKGROUND: In 1981, LWVWA convention, delegates adopted a study of hazardous wastes. A publication, *Hazardous Waste in Washington State*, was prepared in 1982. The 1983 position called for specific and safe management practices for the regulation of existing state landfills and for a facility siting process for new landfills. During the 1983 legislative session, the LWVUS positions were used in calling for stricter regulations over waste management operations. Highly visible LWVWA action during the 1984 and 1985 sessions helped pass bills on new management practices and a recommended facility siting process that is comprehensive, spells out decision making authority and provide for citizen participation.

At the state League convention in 1985 members requested additional information on nuclear waste. The result was a booklet, *Nuclear Waste in Washington State*, published in May of 1987.

Weary of the legislature's failure to enact toxic waste cleanup measures, the League and other environmental groups took matters into their own hands with Initiative 97, a tough stand on cleaning up toxic waste sites by taxing the generators of pollutants to establish a Superfund. Pressured by the big corporations, the legislature enacted a similar, but less stringent, law in a special session, and called it 97B. In

November 1988, the voters were given an opportunity to choose between the two measures, and I-97 became law. In 2001 LWVWA joined nineteen other groups in filing an amicus brief in support of the Department of Ecology in the case of Department of Ecology v. Asarco. This case involved a challenge to the state's Model Toxics Control Act that sought to weaken and eliminate its key provisions. In 2002 the State Supreme Court decided against the challenge and allowed Ecology to assign the cost of cleanup to Asarco.

The League's position on solid waste management as stated in 1972 foreshadowed the legislative action that followed 17 years later. The Waste Not Washington Act became law in April 1989, with much bipartisan support, following two years of work by the Joint Select Committee on Preferred Solid Waste Management. The priorities for solid waste management were listed as follows: 1) waste reduction; 2) recycling, with source separation or recyclable materials as the preferred method, both economically and environmentally; 3) energy recovery, incineration, or landfilling of separated waste; and 4) energy recovery, incineration, or landfilling of mixed wastes. A state goal of 50% recycling rate by 1995 was set. County governments were given increased authority in handling the waste streams. Local cities and counties are to set up waste

management programs in accordance with guidelines developed by the Department of Ecology. Markets for recyclables are to be developed, as are uniform policies for governmental purchase of recyclables, packaging standards and the use of recycled materials in manufactured products. Education of the public, especially school children is an important element in the program.

A League representative served on the Washington State Solid Waste Planning Advisory Committee, which helped develop the 1991 Washington State Solid Waste Management Plan.

At the 1991 convention members adopted by concurrence the position of the League of Women Voters of Seattle on "Toxics in the Home." The material used to reach that position was printed in the 1991 summer State *VOTER*.

The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) represents all stakeholder interests and continues to monitor the U.S. Department of Energy's progress on decontaminating and cleaning up of the Hanford Site. The Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) is a legally binding agreement negotiated between the regulators, EPA, Washington State and the responsible party, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The agreement was signed in 1989 and contains milestones for measured progress. Two major efforts will determine clean up progress in the near future.

- 1) The Groundwater/Vadose Zone Integration Project attempts to characterize the underground storage tank leaks and also assesses groundwater contamination at the tank farm.
- 2) A vitrification plant to transform the high-level waste from the storage tanks into more stable, safer glass rods.

The LWVWA has a representative on the HAB, which continues to follow the cleanup efforts closely while keeping the DOE and regulators accountable for a meaningful public involvement process. In 2019 the HAB celebrated 25 years of volunteer work providing more than 300 pieces of consensus, well-informed advice and white papers to the US Department of Energy (DOE), the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

The League has also worked with other organizations to press the DOE to initiate a National Equity Dialogue with stakeholders from sites across the country to plan together for equitable storage and disposal of all nuclear material. The DOE agreed to fund four regional pilot programs to provide models for the full national Dialogue. LWVWA applied for and received a pilot grant. Workshops were held in September 1997 in Washington and Oregon to enable citizens to identify the values and concerns for the Northwest and to influence the DOE's decisions on the ultimate fate of plutonium, highly enriched uranium, and other nuclear waste materials.

Toxic wastes disposed of in fertilizers (a legal practice) came to public attention with a Seattle newspaper series in 1997. Following a legal challenge by several Seattle groups to the Environmental Protection Agency on this issue, the parties settled the case and EPA began developing in earnest its rules to provide more regulation over this practice. The only public hearing on the proposed rules was held in Seattle in 2001. LWVWA testified in

support of even greater regulation than was proposed with a long-range goal of phasing out altogether the disposal of toxic wastes in fertilizers. LWVWA has been working with Washington Toxics Coalition and several other groups for the phase-out and eventual elimination of persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs). These substances, including arsenic, lead and dioxin, persist in the environment, build up in the bodies of plants, animals and humans, and are highly toxic. In 2000 Dept. of Ecology produced its final Strategy which was presented to the Legislature; in 2001 funding was approved by the Legislature to implement the first steps in this phase-out of PBTs. Washington is the first state in the country to have such a strategy.

In 2005 LWVWA worked with the American Lung Association of Washington (ALAW), Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (WPSR), and Washington Toxics Coalition (WTC) to get the Department of Ecology to plan for the phase out of flame retardants, and to pass a Mold Notification bill that requires the owners of rental property to notify renters of the health effects and causes of mold as well as what they can do to control mold. Landlords and others can download this information from <https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/HealthyHome/Contaminants/Mold/RentersLandlordsandMold>

In 2005 LWVWA supported I-297 concerning "mixed" radioactive and nonradioactive hazardous waste mandating cleanup of contamination before additional waste is added, prioritizing cleanup, providing for public participation and enforcement through citizen lawsuits. Initiative passed.

In 2007, the League took a leading role in lobbying and passage of a Budget Proviso for \$466,000 to help over 620 low income children on Medicaid with mild to severe asthma in King County. Qualifying children have two or more symptom days every week. It is estimated that by spending \$736 per child for home visits by trained community health workers to reduce exposure to allergens in the home, there will be a saving of \$2238 in reduced Medicaid expenses for hospitals, emergency care of the children, and other medical expenses. The \$1500 net savings per child per year amounts to a \$930,000 reduction in Medicaid expenses. Some 50% of these savings belong to the State. The other 50% will go the federal government. There are 39,000 children with moderate to severe asthma in the State.

The LWVWA supported bills in the 2018 legislative session that constrained the use of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemical constituents in fire suppression foams and in fast food wrappers because these chemicals are likely affecting health and are finding their way into our environment. During the 2019 session, the League supported successful bills to encourage voluntary cleanup of toxic sites with timely Department of Ecology consultations, and to identify and regulate toxic constituents in manufactured products. The League supported several bills in the 2019 session to reduce single-use plastic waste from drinking straws, cutlery, and grocery carry-out bags, but these did not pass in that session.

In 2022 LWVWA supported two successful bills concerning the disposal of organics: Food and yard waste landfill disposal is to be reduced 75% by 2030 and methane gas capture systems

are to be installed. LWVWA supported the comprehensive RENEW Act on extended producer responsibility and recycling which was not enacted.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON WASTE MANAGEMENT:

Hazardous Waste Management (1983)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

HW-1: To protect the public health and the environment, the State of Washington must enforce strict regulation of the treatment, transportation and disposal of hazardous waste. Funding must be adequate and may include a tax on generators of such waste.

HW-2: Regulations and incentives should encourage the following practices in order of priority: Waste reduction; recycling and reprocessing; detoxification and incineration as applicable. The least desirable management is any disposal that threatens the waters of the state, especially the ground water.

HW-3: The government must assume responsibility for research and long-range planning for facilities that will treat hazardous wastes, reduce travel distances and minimize the need for storage and landfill. Facilities should be sited based on environmental criteria and with effective public participation.

HW-4: Citizen awareness of the problems and their involvement in decision-making is essential.

Solid Waste (1972)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

SO-1: State laws pertaining to solid waste should be coordinated and include guidelines for local implementation. Such laws could include tax incentives and penalties, financial assistance to local government and support of research.

SO-2: Consumers should share in the costs of local waste collection and disposal.

SO-3: Legislation to discourage littering and encourage recycling could include requiring deposits on beverage containers and discouraging unnecessary packaging as well as promoting educational efforts.

Toxics in the Home (1991)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

TM-1: Measures to reduce the exposure of the population to toxics in the home. Research and education should be emphasized.

Social Policy

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

POSITION IN BRIEF: 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.

BACKGROUND: The League's Administration of Justice position has its root in a 1939 study, "Needs of Delinquent and Dependent Children." This position established our support for the adequate protection of juveniles. As part of a study of the state constitution (1965), the League focused on the judicial branch. From this study came our position on an intermediate appellate court. The League was present to see the culmination of its efforts when the twelve judges of the three divisions of the Court of Appeals were sworn in (August 1969).

League members were active in the Citizens' Conference on Washington Courts. Our position was updated in 1973, and in 1975 Administration of Justice was adopted as a separate program item. League undertook a study of judicial reforms including court jurisdiction, selection and tenure of judges, the penal system and juvenile justice.

In 1979 the League adopted a study of the adult corrections system. The publication "*Corrections?*" and the 1980 consensus on the correction system were a result of this study. The League helped write legislation to remove juvenile offenders and boat and game offenders from adult jails (1984).

The League's initial study on juvenile justice focused on the Juvenile Court. Our 1976 position was the basis for our lobbying efforts in opposition to the incarceration of dependent youth in state facilities for delinquents (SB 3116). In 1981 League adopted by concurrence with the Thurston County LWV a position relating to the housing of juveniles and dependent children within the justice system. As a member of the Judicial Administration Commission (1984), the League was involved in studying Washington's court system: its funding, structure and operations.

In 1991 the LWV Seattle studied drug abuse and developed a position that supported measures to expand drug abuse prevention education and treatment programs. In 2000 the King County Bar Association began the Drug Policy Project a unique partnership of lawyers, doctors, scholars, other professions and citizen groups. The LWV of Seattle has participated on the Drug Policy steering committee as publications were researched and published. The first publication “Is It Time to End the War on Drugs” was summarized and printed in the LWV Seattle September 2003 *VOTER* in order to update members. The Drug Policy Project promotes a public health approach to drug abuse, stressing a shift of resources to research, education, prevention and treatment as an alternative to the continued use of criminal sanctions.

The 2005 Convention of the LWVWA adopted by concurrence the LWV Seattle position on Drug Abuse and will be supporting legislative efforts that support the public health approach to the problem of drug abuse.

The 2021 legislative session saw the passage of more than a dozen bills in the area of police reform and other criminal justice issues. The LWVWA supported bills that: restrict or eliminate the use of dangerous police tactics, adopt a statewide standard regarding the use of force, require officers to intervene in situations involving excessive use of force, and improve the process for decertifying officers who have engaged in serious misconduct. The LWVWA also supported a bill that automatically restores the right to vote to people who

have formerly been incarcerated as well as a bill creating prison to post-secondary education pathways.

At the 2021 Convention, LWVA members adopted by concurrence LWV California positions on Criminal Justice. These positions address all aspects of the criminal legal system, from policing practices through reentry into communities for those who have been incarcerated. These new positions will be pivotal in supporting evidence-based solutions that will make our communities safer for all and address systemic bias in the criminal legal system.

The 2022 legislative session saw a pushback against the wide-ranging and historic police reform bills passed in 2021. The legislature clarified some of the provisions of the 2021 legislation but did not significantly repeal any of the reforms. Lawmakers also passed bills reducing the legal financial obligations for those convicted of crimes, ending prison gerrymandering (no longer counting people in state custody as residing at the correctional facility where they are incarcerated), and reducing barriers to professional licensing for those with criminal convictions. In addition, at the 2022 LWVUS Convention, delegates overwhelmingly adopted by concurrence the California League of Women Voters Criminal Justice Position. This position, a portion of which was adopted by LWVWA last year, supports advocacy in the areas of policing practices, pretrial procedure, sentencing, incarceration, and reentry.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE:

Adult Corrections (1981)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

AC-1: A system of sentencing should provide accountability, equity and uniformity among courts and jurisdictions. Flexible guidelines should take into account the diversity among individuals and situations. There is a need for compromise between determinate and indeterminate sentencing.

AC-2: In the case of determinate sentencing where there is no role for the parole board, a support and/or review board should exist.

AC-3: A separate Department of Corrections should be established thereby enhancing visibility and accountability.

AC-4: New facilities are needed. Small prisons should facilitate the separation of offenders needed for security and offer the maximum rehabilitation opportunities.

AC-5: Funding for alternatives to incarceration should be a Legislative priority.

AC-6: Effective rehabilitation is society's best protection. Changes within the penal system should improve conditions and strengthen opportunities for vocational and educational activities.

Women and men should be treated equally.

Court System (1968 - 1977)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

CS-1: The judicial article of the State Constitution should establish a system of courts with specific details to be determined by the legislature. (Judicial Article 1968)

CS-2: There should be a two-level trial court composed of a Superior Court and a District Court. Both should be courts of record. (Trial Courts 1977)

CS-3: The essential functions of an appellate court are to maintain uniform administration of the law, eliminate undue delay in processing appeals and to provide guidance and assistance to the lower courts. Review of Intermediate Appellate Court decisions should be at the discretion of the Supreme Court. Cases involving death penalty, life imprisonment and constitutional questions should be appealed directly from the Superior Court to the Supreme Court. Location and operation of the Intermediate Appellate Court should be flexible enough to respond to changing population and caseloads. Panels should have an uneven number of judges, preferably three but no more than five judges. Provision should be made for the rotation of judges and for the addition of new judges and panels when and where needed. (Appellate Court 1968, 1969)

CS-4: The reception and processing of cases should be simple and orderly. All cases should be determined promptly. Fair

consideration should be given to each type of case. Policies, procedures and rules should be uniform throughout the state. The court systems should be designed to attract the best judicial and non-judicial officers and they should be paid accordingly. The courts should have competent supporting staff and appropriate facilities. Our court system should be flexible in order to respond to changing needs and demands of the times. (Standards 1977)

CS-5: A non-partisan nominating commission composed of both lawyers and laymen should present names of judicial candidates to the Governor for appointment. Voters should have the opportunity for periodic review of judges appointed through the nomination process. Until Washington has a merit system for selecting judges, mid-term vacancies in judicial positions should be filled by Governor's appointment from a list proposed by an impartial group of lawyers and laymen. A judicial qualifications commission should be comprised of members of the judiciary, bar and non-attorney citizens and should be broad-based in representation. (Selection of Judges 1977)

Juvenile Justice (1976)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

JJ-1: Youth should be entitled to basic legal rights (notice of charges, right to confront and cross examine witnesses, privilege against self-incrimination, right to an attorney) as set down by the U.S. Supreme Court. These rights should not include the right to jury trial or to bail.

JJ-2: Basic human rights for youth should include education, health care, a stable home environment, counseling, protection from abuse and neglect, and rehabilitation.

JJ-3: Society is entitled to protection of life, property and other rights as guaranteed by law, regardless of the age of the offender.

JJ-4: Juveniles should not be incarcerated for status offenses. Delinquent children may have to be incarcerated in certain cases but this should occur only when all other resources have been exhausted or when the crime is so serious that there is no other way to protect society.

JJ-5: Youth must accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. At the same time, however, age, intellect and mental capabilities of the child must be considered. Home, school and community must share in the guidance and teaching responsibility.

JJ-6: Juveniles should not be kept in the same facilities as adults. Dependent children should not be kept in the same facilities as delinquents. (1981)

JJ-7: There should be some authority in the Juvenile Justice Law to oversee its implementation.

Certain first and minor offenders should be diverted from the

court system and their problems handled by the community.

JJ-8: The law should provide facilities and personnel for mentally and emotionally disturbed juveniles as well as for problems arising from alcohol and drug abuse.

Drug Abuse (2005)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports measures to expand and fund drug abuse prevention education and drug abuse treatment programs as a means to reduce the demand for drugs.

DA-1: Expanding and funding for school programs to prevent drug abuse and establishing of programs to reach school drop-outs.

DA-2: Public education in family management, parenting, job skills, and evaluating of commercial media which enhance drug use.

DA-3: Integrated services as appropriate, including long-term treatment, counseling and mental health services, to all drug abusers and to meet the needs of individuals with co-occurring disorders.

DA-4: Support of community involvement to provide alternative behavior opportunities for potential drug abusers. Citizen block watch assistance for neighborhood police in crime prevention.

DA-5: Strict enforcement of penalties for drug traffickers. Periodic evaluations of drug programs and of interagency coordination and cooperation.

DA-6: There should be periodic evaluations of drug programs and of interagency coordination and cooperation.

Criminal Justice (2021)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

CJ-1: A criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry.

CJ-2: The elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities.

CJ-3: Policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

CJ-4: Collaboration between government and community throughout every stage of the criminal justice system.

CJ-5: A focus on humane treatment and rehabilitation with the goal of promoting the successful reentry into communities of those who have been incarcerated.

CJ-6: Reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies (including scheduled, periodic audits of program and policy effectiveness.)

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

POSITION IN BRIEF: *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 that is 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.

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.

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.

BACKGROUND: Born out of the suffrage movement, the League early on addressed existing social problems. Child labor laws were a state program item in the '20s. The League focused on adoption procedures in the '40s. In 1983 League adopted by concurrence the position of the Seattle League on "Day Care." This concurrence was subject to subsequent study and approval by local Leagues (1984).

The League has testified on the critical need for day care services. Local Leagues were encouraged to develop data on availability, costs and conditions of local day care centers.

League successfully supported the passage of the "Trust Fund Bill" that established a tax on marriage licenses, with the funds raised earmarked for addressing child abuse problems. League played an important role in the 1984 legislative session lobbying for improved children's services. League was also involved in successfully lobbying for the reauthorization of the Washington Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and the implementation of the Children and Family Services Act.

In 1985 and 1986, League conducted an extensive statewide study of the effectiveness of services for at-risk children — those who are abused, neglected, truant, runaway, emotionally disturbed or substance abuser. On the basis of interviews by local Leagues in twenty communities, the League issued a report on services for children at risk that formed the basis for a new League position and expanded lobbying efforts on behalf of children. In 1987, League lobbied for increased appropriations for children's services, including increases in day care reimbursement rates, supported measures to reduce the child welfare caseload, to increase legal protections for abused children, and to establish a Governor's Commission for Children.

At the 1991 convention a new study was adopted to examine Washington child custody and support laws and guidelines. The 1992 study, which included a survey of members of the judicial system, has been received with acclaim throughout the state.

In 1995 League closely watched the passage of a child abuse prevention bill to provide family preservation services to avoid out of home placement of abused and neglected children.

League's major effort in the 1997 legislative session was to extend the First Steps program to children up to age three. The legislation did not pass, but we plan to bring it back in 1998. Passage would have meant a significant step forward in prevention of child abuse and neglect for some 8,200 children

born to families where there is high risk of abuse. League helped to defeat legislation that would have eliminated protections for young workers as well as parental "rights" bills aimed at giving parents more control by cutting youngsters off from needed help from the community.

In 1998 and 1999, increased help for programs for young children was slim. Mostly LWV sought to avoid deep cuts and save some programs. A slight increase in funding and improvement in providing assistance and information for foster parents were gains. Funding to identify policies to encourage higher rates of kinship care placements was provided. Safety of young children was improved by HB 1898 authorizing "Crisis Nurseries." We will continue to work for child safety programs such as controlling bullying and SB5236, to decriminalize the act of transferring a newborn to a qualified person at an appropriate location. SB 5606 required Background checks for DSHS workers, but more is needed to protect children in non-licensed/in home, state subsidized facilities.

The 2005 Legislature passed SB5441, creating the Washington Learns and led by Governor Gregoire. After over a year of intensive study of the structure of our education system and its funding, a final report was developed with comprehensive, long-term recommendations for creating a world-class, learner-focused, seamless education system for Washington. The Early Learning Council served as one of the advisory councils to the Washington Learns Steering committee.

The Early Learning Council was established by the legislature in 2005 to provide leadership and direction for the realignment and expansion of early learning services. It recommended the creation of the Department of Early Learning.

In 2006 Governor Gregoire signed into law the bill creating the Department of Early Learning. The Department administers existing programs such as childcare licensing and subsidies, ECEAP contracts, the Head Start Collaborative Office, and the Early Reading Initiative. It also works with Thrive by Five, the public private sector to build a comprehensive system of Early Learning.

The legislature in 2007 created an advisory Council to DEL. In addition, it created a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), a childcare information system, new duties supporting parents, assigned duties to the private public partnership and directs DEL to review and revise child care provider rules.

Home visitation services were also funded in the 2007 legislature to contract to WPCAN (changed name to Parent

Trust of Washington) for the purpose of improving parenting skills and outcomes for children.

In 2008 the League study *Early Care and Education of Young Children Birth to Five* was approved, updating the LWV earlier positions on “Day Care”. Also in 2008, the LWV became a partner in the statewide Early Learning Action Alliance advocating for improved early care and education opportunities for all children.

In 2009 HB 1943 requires the Professional Development Consortium in collaboration with the Department of Early Learning to develop recommendations for a comprehensive statewide system of preparation and professional development for early learning and before and after school workforce. Final recommendations must be presented to the Governor and Legislature by December 31, 2010.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS:

Child Custody and Support (1993)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- CC-1:** 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. All parties involved should work to reduce any adversarial aspects of the proceedings. In establishing child support, courts must ensure that deviations from the standard calculation do not place children in poverty.
- CC-2:** Children are entitled to support [that is] adequate to meet basic needs, which include the normal and reasonable costs of food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental expenses, childcare, education, and incidental needs. Child support should be commensurate with the parents' income, resources, and standard of living. Courts should have the discretion to order post-secondary educational support in appropriate circumstances.
- The parents' child support obligation should be divided on a non-discriminatory basis in proportion to their incomes.
 - In determining an appropriate level of child support, income should be defined broadly to include income from any source. Children from earlier relationships should not be penalized due to support obligations owed to children from subsequent relationships.
 - For purposes of calculating child support, income should not be imputed to a parent who remains home to care for young children or children with special needs. Staying home to care for children should have monetary value attached to those services.
- CC-3:** The League of women Voters supports vigorous, efficient and innovative child support enforcement methods. An effective enforcement program should include non-judicial dispute resolution alternatives and incentives to ensure that parents voluntarily fulfill their child obligation.
- CC-4:** The League of Women Voters supports broad education regarding the responsibilities and consequences of parenthood.

Children's Services (1987)

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:

- CH-1:** Stable and adequate funding for a coordinated continuum of services for children at risk. Priority should be given to prevention, early identification and intervention services, community based treatment and day treatment programs and funding for residential care.

Early Care and Education of Young Children (2009)

DC-1: The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- The quality of the child's early care and education, birth – 5, is critical to maximizing the child's future development.
- Parents are a child's first teacher.
- The State of Washington has an important role in assisting parents to ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

The LWVWA believes the State of Washington should support:

- Home visiting and other educational programs for parents with young children
- Programs for children with special needs
- Increasing access to preschool programs for children age 3 - 5
- Quality child care programs for children age birth - 5
- Improvements to child care programs
- Encouraging public- private partnerships to expand the early care system

DC-2: (1984) In order to provide for the general welfare of children, the state should maintain and enforce minimum standards for day care. Minimum standards should include provision for a safe, healthy, clean environment; creative and child oriented activities; competent caring providers and sufficient staff for the number of children in care.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

POSITION IN BRIEF: 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.

BACKGROUND: The 1989 convention voted to “Examine the ways in which Washington state and local economies may be affected by changes in the defense budget, our natural resource base, international trade and other factors.” After the study was completed in 1991, *Targeting Tomorrow: Washington's economy adjusts to the '90s* was printed to share the information gathered with the public. This

publication was supported by the State of Washington Department of Community Development.

Soon after, the governor appointed an Economic Diversification Committee with appointed members from all sections of the state, and from diversified walks of life. The committee met regularly, encouraged diversification in the economy with some success, until it disbanded in 1994.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION: *The League of Women Voters of Washington:*

ED-1: Recognizes that a strong mixture of large and small businesses is necessary for a balanced state economy, and supports measures that encourage both large and small business with the following recommendations:

- The quality of the environment should be a prime consideration when making economic decisions. The environment should not be permitted to degrade.
- Small businesses and rural businesses should be especially encouraged until such time as there is a

better mix of small, medium, and large businesses to make up to a balanced economy in all areas of the state.

ED-2: Support measures that contribute to long-range planning and cooperation among all levels of government. Such measures should encourage local initiatives wherever possible. (1991)

GUN SAFETY IN WASHINGTON

POSITION IN BRIEF: *Government should regulate ownership and possession of firearms and limit their accessibility.*

BACKGROUND: The 1990 League of Women Voters national convention adopted a position on Gun Control by consensus. LWVWA adopted a study in 1993 to examine and evaluate existing Washington state gun control laws and their enforcement.

Though Washington state laws have improved gun safety through legislative action, major progress happened as a result of voter initiatives which LWV supported. A year by year summary follows.

1997-Initiative 676, required that all handguns be sold with trigger-locking devices for safe storage and that handgun owners be required to obtain a safety license and training in safe operation. I-676 failed on the ballot,

2004-US Congress fails to renew assault weapons ban.

2005- Washington legislature passed HB1687 strengthening provisions concerning the possession of firearms by persons found not guilty by reason of insanity.

2014- Initiative 594 passed by a wide margin. The initiative required a background check for all gun sales, including gun shows and private transfers.

2016- Initiative 1094 passed with broad support (68%) to enable Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) which allow

family members and law enforcement to obtain a court order to remove weapons from persons adjudicated to be a danger to themselves and others. The initiative was strengthened in the 2019 legislative session by allowing ERPO to be used for juveniles.

2018-Initiative 1639 passed and took effect July 1, 2019. It prohibits the sale of semiautomatic assault rifles to individuals under the age of 21 and requires an enhanced background check as required for handguns. The National Rifle Association (NRA) and Second Amendment Foundation have filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging provisions relating to the increased age requirement and sales to people from out-of-state, alleging that it violates the right to bear arms and wrongly regulates interstate commerce. The lawsuit is currently in the discovery phase in the Ninth Circuit.

The legislature also passed a ban on bump stocks.

2019- Legislative session passed a bill to prohibit undetectable printed firearms and untraceable firearms without serial numbers. LWVWA Convention concurred to update reference to Gun Safety.

Local governments have also passed legislation requiring safe storage of weapons and mandatory reporting of lost and stolen weapons.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON GUN SAFETY (1994): *The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:*

GS-1: Government should regulate ownership and possession of firearms and limit their accessibility.

GS-2: Firearms should be regulated by government through measures which may include the following.

- Federal: applications to purchase; registration; manufacturers' and dealers' license fees; restrictions on owning, transporting and distributing; prohibition on types and places allowed, extended waiting periods (as consistent with LWVUS Gun Control position).

- State: licensing to purchase; issuance of state and local ID cards; registration; manufacturers' and dealers' license fees; restrictions on owning, carrying, transporting and distributing; prohibition on types and places allowed; extended waiting periods.
- Local: prohibition on places allowed.

GS-3: Taxes and license fees should be increased to help pay for:

- education about firearm safety
- background and verification checks for gun purchasers
- violence prevention programs and measures

- investigation and prosecution of illegal trafficking in firearms.

GS-4: Measures should be taken to limit young people's access to firearms. These should include the following:

- gun-free zones in school areas
- an age limit of 18 for the use and possession of guns
- requirements for safe gun storage

GS-5: Civil and criminal parental liability under certain circumstances.

HEALTH CARE

POSITION IN BRIEF: Action to control total system expenditures and to provide universal access to affordable health services with seamless coverage regardless of one's health status.

BACKGROUND: Following the establishment of the State of Washington Health Care Commission in 1990, the League actively monitored its public hearings, provided input, and attended meetings on state health care reform across the state.

The Washington State Health Services Act of 1993, one of the most sweeping health care reform acts in the nation, was mostly repealed by the 1995 legislature. Financing was a major stumbling block, as was the model for health care delivery, which was an employer based, managed competition, multiple sponsor model of health care reform.

The state League Board voted to become a member of the Washington Coalition for Insurance Parity in 1998. It took eight years, until the 2006 legislative session, to get a bill passed and signed by the governor that will assure people with mental illness will have deductibles and co-pays on a par with the other illnesses covered by their policies.

Health care access was a significant focus in the 2007 Washington Legislature. The Northwest Health Law Advocates (NoHLA) prepared an excellent summary of bills in May 2007. The LWV-WA professional and volunteer lobbyists acknowledge, with thanks, the work done by NoHLA in its continued monitoring of health bills, on into 2021.

Highlights of the 2007 bills passed include; expanding DSHS requirements to provide affordable medical coverage to children under 19 with family income below 300% of federal poverty. And extending Medicaid coverage for former foster youth from age 18-21; providing for an evidence-based children's mental health system, based on integrated children's health services, and including coverage of outpatient and family therapy, effective July 1, 2008.

Then, in 2009 major cuts were made in the health care safety net. The Basic Health Plan was reduced by 42%, and the General Assistance-Unemployable (GAU) was reduced by 18%.

In 2010 an important part of the budget was the creation of a Joint Select Committee of Senate and House members to work together to determine how best to implement federal health reform legislation in Washington State. The Patient Protection Affordable Care Act (PPACA) contained many

provisions for state health care funding. Some of the funding began in 2010 with the expanding of the Medicaid population up to 133% FPL.

From 2011 through 2013 the Joint Select Committee wrote legislation to incorporate the PPACA in Washington State, which would include Medicaid expansion and the Health Benefit Exchanges. Enrollment in Medicaid Expansion began October 1, 2013, with the benefits beginning January 1, 2014.

Through the enrollment of approximately 840,000 uninsured Washingtonians in Medicaid Expansion and in the Health Benefit Exchange during 2013-2014, Washington was one of the nation's most active states working on healthcare reform. Two other important pieces of legislation passed in the 2013 legislative session: Dental benefits were restored to Medicaid insured adults and Apple Health for Kids was restored to full strength, including for immigrant children.

In 2015, the involuntary outpatient mental health treatment act was passed concerning the assessment of available psychiatric treatment committed to less restrictive alternative treatment was passed.

In 2016 legislation was passed that provides for continuity of care for recipients of medical assistance during periods of incarceration.

In 2017 a law passed that modifies standards for opioid use and treatment and education by defining terms dealing with opioids.

In 2018 a bill was passed requiring health plans to cover, with no cost sharing, all preventive services required to be covered under federal law as of December 31, 2016. Also, a bill was passed requiring health insurance plans issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2019, to provide coverage for all contraceptive drugs, devices and other products approved by the FDA, voluntary sterilization, and any consultations, examinations, procedures and medical services that are necessary. The coverage may not require copayments, deductibles, or other forms of cost-sharing. The LWV-WA Board approved membership in the Health Care is a Human

Right Coalition, working toward a single payer/improved Medicare for All solution to reform.

In the 2019-2020 Legislative session bills passed protecting healthcare consumers and establishing behavioral and substance abuse services. League members acted by responding to Action Alerts and writing personal testimony to gain passage of a bill protecting consumers from charges for out-of-network health care services, eliminating 'surprise billing. Also, a bill concerning long-term services and supports, allows the state to establish a payroll deduction tax that will cover long-term care services for those who have paid into the coverage pool. A bill concerning opioid use disorder treatment, prevention, and related services became law. A telemedicine bill passed that allows the use of telemedicine in underserved areas as a reimbursed service by which an individual receives medical services from a health care provider without in person contact with the provider and was expanded to audio-only telemedicine in 2021. Also, expanding adolescent behavioral health care access as reviewed and recommended by the Children's Mental Health work group, was passed into law.

In 2021 the Legislative long session, the first year of the biennium, a bill to establish the Universal Health Care commission was passed to prepare the state for the creation of a health care system to provide coverage and access through a universal financing system once federal authority has been acquired. The 15-member commission must submit a baseline report to the governor and the legislature by November 1, 2022. League members across the state offered written testimony and contacted their legislators to achieve passage of the State office of Behavioral Health Consumer Advocacy. The Partnership Access Line (PAL) for parents

needing child/teen behavioral health services was established. Another bill requires a hospital emergency department to dispense opioid overdose reversal medication to a patient with symptoms of an opioid overdose upon discharge. Also, as of 2021 the Department of Health must establish a School Based Health Clinic program office that will develop and award grant funding for school clinics.

In 2022 several bills were passed reflecting recognition of devastating inequities existing in our healthcare and social systems. League members went into action advocating for bills that funded the profession of doulas, expanded the scope of practice for midwives, and approved a multi-state compact for occupational therapists. Assuring adequate funding for primary care and an all-important amendment to the Charity Care Law were strongly supported by League members and allies. The Attorney General introduced a bill requiring that eligibility for charity care adjustments to costs, either full or partial forgiveness, be based on poverty level and adjusted for family size. This pertained to costs incurred in health care systems for care provided on or after July 1, 2022. Passage of the Apple Health and Homes Act was a crowning achievement of the session. With strong bipartisan support those identified as homeless with a chronic medical condition can be offered supportive housing based on financial need. The bill was endorsed by over 80 organizations across the state including the LWVWA.

At the national level, the LWVUS, at their June 2022 Convention, adopted positions calling for "a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes (commonly known as single-payer) and opposing a strictly private market-based model of financing health care."

THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON HEALTH CARE: *The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:*

HC-1: Policies, as part of comprehensive reform of the existing health system, which:

- Ensure universal access for all residents to a comprehensive, uniform, and affordable set of health services. These services shall be available regardless of one's health status (i.e., pre-existing conditions) or financial status.
- Provide "seamless" coverage and continuity of care, to the extent possible, regardless of changes in life

circumstances such as change in employment, marital status, financial status, or health status.

- Establish a mechanism to adequately control total system expenditures for health services while maintaining quality standards of care.
- Assure that no one shall be forced into poverty because of medical or long-term needs. (1992)

HUMAN RESOURCES

POSITION IN BRIEF: *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.*

BACKGROUND: From its inception League has worked for equal rights and social reforms. The focus shifted each decade but remained on the need for equal rights. It is notable that all of the positions in this section were adopted in the period of

1970 through 2000. It is also notable that housing was an early prominent issue and remains so today.

Beginning in 1969, when the convention adopted a study that focused on discrimination in housing and the need for and

availability of low-cost housing, through the 2000s, the League has shifted as issues arose. The 1970s saw adoption of the housing position, a study of state welfare system and a study on the status of women. There was also a campaign to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the State constitution, and expansion of the human resources position to add provisions related to domestic violence.

League also lobbied in that period with partial success to prevent the curtailment of available services and the closing of several Human Rights Commission offices and participated in the campaign to defeat Initiative 471 which would have deleted all Medicaid funding for abortions. In 1984 we joined with other interested groups to increase public awareness of social problems including domestic violence, comparable worth and chemical dependency. The programs highlighted the effects of these problems on youth, women and sexual or ethnic minorities.

In 1985 the League supported establishment of a low-income housing trust fund, and to fund it. League further helped amend the Family Independence Program (FIP) for welfare reform into acceptable form, which was enacted into law.

In the 1990's the convention adopted a new position on welfare, combining both the LWVWA position and the LWVUS, and has since continued to actively lobby for adequate funding for programs covered by the positions below. The 1990s also saw an attack on welfare, on spending for a wide spectrum of human services and on the civil rights of non-offender youth and homosexuals, to which League responded with moderate success, including passage of a domestic violence prevention bill to improve victims' access to the courts; systems and procedures so courts, police and prosecutors can do their jobs better; and enforcement mechanisms to improve victim protection.

That decade also included League adoption of a study of "Public Assistance as Social Policy." And revision of the position on Welfare printed below in time for action to respond to Congressional welfare reform that ended the 60-year entitlement of aid to poor families with dependent children, and passed on to the states the task of implementing the federal reform. Though the outcomes were not entirely what the League wanted, we lobbied for guaranteed child care (without a high co-payment) for every participant who must go to work and general assistance for legal immigrants.

League has continued to lobby for approaches to welfare more attuned to the needs of recipients and their dependent children.

Also during the 1900s, LWVWA relied upon League principles and LWVUS positions in successfully opposing legislation and the five initiatives that would have legalized discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals in our state. An amendment to our positions on Education and

Human Resources was adopted to clarify our long-standing commitment to equal rights for all people and to be consistent with LWVUS positions. We also opposed elimination of Affirmative Action.

In the late 1990s through the early 2000s, League lobbied for "a well-written Anti-Bullying Bill" during that same period.

League supported a bill to develop a grant program to fund public educational activities regarding the events around the forced internment of civilians of Japanese ancestry and supported a bill which would enable employers to file a lawsuit on the basis of employment discrimination regardless of the number of persons employed by the employer as well as opposed legislation that limited benefits of state employees to lawful spouses and dependent children. attention shifted in the early 2000s to opposition to transgender hate crimes and implementation of the death penalty and successfully opposed legislation to allow the Boy Scouts to receive state funds while discriminating against gay scouts and leaders.

In recent years, attention has returned to housing. Homelessness has burgeoned, and the systemic racial biases have led to very disproportionate numbers of African-Americans and Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness relative to their share of the population at large. The legislature has given a great deal of attention to this issue over the last couple of years and ultimately, in 2021, invested massive, record amounts of funds in the Housing Trust Fund, in Housing and Essential Needs programs, rental assistance and much more. The legislature also created both incentives and penalties for local jurisdictions to assure that they plan to address the housing needs of their communities. This will be an issue that League will watch as comprehensive plans are adopted and submitted to the Department of Commerce in June 2024.

In 2022, the Legislature continued to add substantial funding for new affordable housing, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, shelter capacity, rental assistance, weatherization and utility connections. Additionally, they increased funding for the Housing and Essential Needs program, tenant protections, incentives for non-profit development of affordable housing and for local governments to implement HB 1220, passed in 2021, that requires comprehensive plan housing elements to include provisions for low-income and severely low-income housing and shelter needs over the 20-year plan period. It is important to note, however, that even with these large funding measures, affordable housing remains far short of the need throughout Washington State.

THE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS ON HUMAN RESOURCES:

Discrimination (1997)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

DI-1: All levels of government share the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.

Domestic Violence (1979)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

DV-1: Shelter services should be staffed 24 hours a day. **DV-2:** Day care should be provided which includes appropriate structured activities which deal with the emotional needs of the children involved.

DV-3: Both professional and peer counseling should be offered within a counseling program. Referral services should be available. Opportunities should be provided to improve self-esteem, assertiveness, parenting skills and career planning.

DV-4: Education should be offered to acquaint the community at large with the philosophy and services of the program. It is important to increase the understanding of the community regarding domestic violence, its impact on people and the potential role of the community in seeking solutions.

DV-5: Legislative and administrative requirements should be minimized. Local policy-making boards should be developed and local control should be encouraged when possible. Advisory boards should be composed of concerned citizens, social service professionals with experience in working with victims of family violence and past users of emergency shelter services.

DV-6: Provisions should be made to offer legal services and legal counseling. Whenever possible and appropriate, paraprofessionals may be used. A close liaison with law enforcement agencies should be encouraged. This may include specialized training for police officials, refinement of existing laws and/or support for new laws that address more effectively the circumstances surrounding family violence.

Housing (1970)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

HO-1: 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.

Status Of Women (1972)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

SW-1: State government shares with other governmental levels the responsibility to enact laws and regulations which provide women, regardless of marital status, rights

and responsibilities equal to those held by men. Strong enforcement powers as well as adequate funding should be provided.

SW-2: Procedures for divorce should be simple, equitable and as inexpensive as possible. Divorce law should include the no-fault concept. There should be provision for counseling; conciliation is to be encouraged and the rights and welfare of children are to be protected. **SW-3:** Settlements should be based on individual need and the ability to pay.

SW-4: Employment laws and regulations should encourage practices which are fair to individuals of both sexes. Job-related benefits should be extended to workers regardless of sex.

SW-5: Every individual should have the right to choose his or her legal domicile regardless of marital status.

Welfare (1993, 1996)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes:

WE-1: Policies eliminating disincentives to work and implementing the social goals of preventing and reducing poverty should make it possible for individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency. These policies should be implemented at federal, state and local governmental levels. Programs must be efficiently administered and evaluated periodically. We support state government programs that, alone or with private efforts:

- increase job opportunities;
- provide opportunities and incentives for education and training for employment at wages sufficient to support a family and that include support services such as quality child care, health care, transportation, counseling and job placement;
- emphasize life skills such as family planning and parenting, as well as work skills;
- are tailored to meet the needs of the individuals;
- decrease the incidence of teenage pregnancy.

WE-2: Persons who are unable to work, whose incomes are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available, should be assured of public assistance and services sufficient to meet their needs for food, shelter and health care. When the federal government does not provide sufficient resources to meet these basic needs, state government must assume that responsibility. In times of budgetary constraints, our state government's highest priority must be to meet people's basic needs for food, shelter and health care, with a special emphasis on protecting and nurturing children. We support:

- adequate funding of income maintenance programs (cash grants) measured by a realistic and regularly updated standard of need, and continued eligibility for "in kind" assistance (food stamps, food and nutrition programs, housing and health care and preventive services).

WE-3: We also support a goal of achieving statewide, a continuum of family support services maintained and delivered by public and private entities. Supportive services should be integrated with those available to the general public with charges based on ability to pay.

LOCAL NEWS AND DEMOCRACY

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

BACKGROUND: In early 2021 a group of League members from throughout Washington formed an Affinity Group to consider the decline of local news in the Evergreen state. Members were motivated to do so by reports discussing the growing number of newspaper closures and reductions in coverage as well as by what they observed around them -- thinner newspapers, fewer bylines and generally less local news. The group wanted to learn if communities in Washington were experiencing the same impacts that national researchers were reporting -- reduced voter participation, fewer candidates seeking office, higher government costs, increased political partisanship, less civic engagement and challenges to public health.

Delegates at the 2021 state Convention approved the group's bid to pursue a formal study. Over 18 months, the Local News Committee interviewed more than 60 individuals -- social scientists, elected officials, journalists, publishers, government staff members, public health officials, researchers and others--and reviewed more than 600 documents--newspaper, magazine and journal articles and studies. Much of the research involved interviews with people with extensive knowledge and experience, but it also involved original research, including tracking voter participation in February Special Elections in each of the state's 39 counties from 2008 to 2021, a span of significant newspaper declines. The committee also tracked the closures, launches, and changes in circulation, ownership and publication schedules across the state.

The study focuses on newspapers rather than television, social media and radio because newspapers traditionally have been the most prominent producers of original, in-depth reporting on local government and entities, the information that is crucial to people's understanding of their communities and their ability to make informed decisions.

Moreover, the study doesn't distinguish between news printed on paper versus that which appears solely online. As Spokane Spokesman-Review editor Rob Curley explained, "As long as we understand that the most important part of the word 'newspaper' is 'news' and not 'paper,' we are going to be fine."

In November 2022, the state board formally accepted the completed study, titled "The Decline of Local News and Its Impact on Democracy." In early 2023 the committee began presenting highlights of the report for consideration of consensus on the policy and with 16 Local Leagues participating, consensus was reached. The position was formally adopted at the May 2023 state convention.

In April 2023, at the request of Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson, League representatives testified before a legislative hearing panel in support of Senate Bill 5199, which enables newspaper publishers to seek an exemption from payment of Business & Occupation tax.

Local News and Democracy (2023)

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes:

LN-1: Credible and ethical local journalism, in whatever format it is published (print or online), as essential to our democracy.

LN- 2: Efforts to ensure everyone has access to information necessary for casting an informed ballot and (believes) that credible local news sources are integral to this pursuit.

LN-3: 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: Media literacy and news education, including support for journalism students, is essential. These opportunities should be expanded in schools and throughout communities.

LN-5: 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.



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