

**League of Women Voters of Massachusetts**

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# *State Program Planning Guide*

**2009 – 2011**

## *Program Planning Recommendation Form*

***Due: February 13, 2009***

### Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction to Program Planning	1
Steps to Completing State Program Planning	2
State Program Planning Recommendation Form	5
Appendix: LWVMA Program Positions 2007-2009	7

## INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM PLANNING

The League of Women Voters is one of the most well-respected nonprofit organizations in the nation. One of the reasons the League commands such respect is because it is truly a grassroots organization, especially when it comes to its positions on issues. League positions on issues are developed by studying the issue in depth and reaching a consensus at the grassroots level.

Every two years local Leagues participate in the LWVMA program planning process by reviewing existing positions and making recommendations for the future.

### **What is League program?**

Program is the keystone of the League organization, the basis for both education and action efforts. League program consists of those governmental issues that League members choose for concerted study and actions. It includes adopted positions, upon which action is taken, and issues for study that will lead to a position and action (from *In League*, LWVUS).

### **Why is program planning necessary?**

Every two years at the state and national levels of the League and every year at the local level, members review the current program and recommend changes, deletions, proposed new studies and priorities for action. By doing this the League can focus its efforts on those issues that are most current and relevant.

### **How is program planning accomplished?**

This is the sequence of events that make up the state program planning process:

- The LWVMA Program & Action Committee sends the Program Planning Guide and the Report Form to local Leagues six months prior to the state convention (this packet).
- Local Leagues hold meetings or use other methods to include their members in coming to agreement on state program suggestions for the upcoming biennium.
- Local Leagues send their responses to LWVMA (this year, by **February 13, 2009**).
- Based on this information, the LWVMA board makes recommendations for the upcoming biennium's program. These recommendations are sent to local Leagues six weeks before the LWVMA convention (by **April 17** this year).
- Local Leagues can submit recommendations for changes to the LWVMA board-recommended program (by **May 8, 2009**).
- At convention (**May 29-30, 2009**), delegates vote to adopt the LWVMA program for the next two years. Board-recommended items require a majority vote for adoption; items suggested by local Leagues during the program planning process but not recommended by the LWVMA board require a two-thirds vote.

This Program Planning Guide is designed to help with the program planning process. It reviews the four steps local Leagues should take to complete their part of the process:

1. Decide how your League will encourage and include members in the state program planning process.
2. Assemble and review resource materials.
3. Discuss and decide on your League's recommendations on LWVMA program:
  - current LWVMA positions
  - new studies or updates of current LWVMA position
  - LWVMA action issues
4. Complete and return the Program Planning Recommendations form (**due February 13, 2009**)

The program planning process allows and encourages the participation of all members of the Massachusetts League. *Together*, let's plan a program that helps create enthusiasm for the work of the League at both the local and state levels.

## STEPS TO COMPLETING STATE PROGRAM PLANNING

### STEP 1

#### **DECIDE HOW YOUR LEAGUE WILL ENCOURAGE AND INCLUDE MEMBERS IN THE PROGRAM PLANNING PROCESS.**

Every member of your League should be given the opportunity to participate in the program planning process. There are a number ways your League can do this.

- Plan and publicize a meeting for members to discuss and choose state program. A meeting allows for the interchange of ideas among members, and is a good way for new members to learn about League program. Some local Leagues allot time during a regular board meeting, inviting members to join them to talk about state program planning.
- If a meeting isn't possible, you can print the Program Planning Recommendations form in your bulletin and on your website and ask members to return it to your League with their suggestions. Or you can do a telephone survey to poll your members about their choices. The board then can use these suggestions to complete the recommendations form.
- You can use a combination of asking for input from individual members and a meeting to come to agreement on your League's state program planning suggestions.

### STEP 2

#### **ASSEMBLE AND REVIEW RESOURCE MATERIALS.**

These background materials will help you and your League with program planning:

- LWVMA program positions 2007-2009 (See Appendix)
- LWVMA program book *Where We Stand* (for additional information on LWVMA positions; available online at [www.lwvma.org/wherewestand.shtml](http://www.lwvma.org/wherewestand.shtml))
- LWVUS program book *Impact on Issues* 2008-2010 (<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=5435&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>)
- LWVUS *In League* (See Chapter 10, Program: Study and Action, which explains the process of program adoption; <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=6436>)

### STEP 3

#### **DISCUSS AND DECIDE YOUR LEAGUE'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON LWVMA PROGRAM**

##### **LWVMA Positions**

The first item to discuss and decide when doing state program planning is your League's recommendations on all LWVMA positions: specifically, whether they should be retained, dropped, or updated. Carefully review the current LWVMA positions. They are listed in the Appendix on pages 7-20 in this Guide.

It is important to know if the membership sees the current state positions as valid and useful, to know where there are gaps in existing positions, and to ascertain whether there are positions that no longer command member understanding or agreement. You may want to consider if the position is outdated, how key the issue is today and how an updated position would further the League's mission. You will need to decide if you want to **retain** or **drop** each existing position. Later in the meeting you may even come to the conclusion that a particular position needs a restudy or **update**.

The following definitions should be used to guide these decisions.

**RETAIN:** Members are committed to the position because it is still relevant and they will be involved actively in supporting LWVMA efforts to pursue the position's goals.

**DROP:** The position is no longer useful in its present form or is not supported by most members. If dropped by Convention, action on this position will end. Once a position is dropped, it cannot be reinstated without a new study.

**UPDATE:** A study of limited scope is adopted to reevaluate an existing position in light of new information, changed circumstances, or conflict with another League position with the aim of considering a change to a new position.

Using the Program Planning Form on page 5 of this Guide will help you keep track as your League members discuss LWVMA's current positions.

### **New Studies or Updates of Current LWVMA Positions**

Study is an effort to develop a League position where none exists. Restudy of parts of an existing position can clarify whether member understanding and agreement still exist or address related issues that were not part of the original study. A new study involves research to provide a balanced view of the facts and issues on a public policy topic, followed by an effort to reach member agreement by either consensus on discussion questions or concurrence with a proposed position statement. It is usually a two-year process.

In the League, studies and restudies assume there will be an effort to reach member agreement. Usually member agreement is reached but sometimes it is not. In most cases, member agreement is reached by the decision-making process called consensus. Consensus is a decision-based process with open-ended questions. Alternately, concurrence can be used at the end of a study or restudy. Concurrence is like a vote: members either concur with a proposed position statement or they don't.

When proposing new studies it is also important that your League take into consideration the following:

- The study issue is not a national or local issue. Our concern is with state issues. State Leagues cannot on their own decide to influence national policy.
- Before proposing a new study, review LWVUS *Impact on Issues* and LWVMA *Where We Stand* to be certain we have no current positions on which to base action.
- When considering an issue for study, answer the following questions:
  - Would a study of this issue result in a position that could be used to influence legislative or state government policy? Is this an issue on which legislative action is needed?
  - Does this issue involve a need not being well met by other groups?
  - If recommending a study, will this issue still be timely when the study is completed in two years?
  - Is there sufficient member interest in this issue, locally and statewide?
  - Is this an issue that would attract participation from the community and our members? Would it entice new members or increase the diversity of our participating members?
  - Could the League play a significant role in affecting community concern and/or public policy decisions on this issue? Can the League make a unique contribution by adopting this issue as a program item?
  - Is there leadership at the local and state League level to conduct a statewide study that would result in a valid consensus?
  - If a valid consensus is achieved and a position on the issue developed, do we have the local and state human and financial resources to work toward achieving the goal(s) of the position?
  - Is this an issue that will attract financial support?

- Will your League be willing to get involved – including having your members serve on a study committee –and make the commitment to study the issue?
- There is a cost associated with new studies. The amount varies depending on what material is already available. Most studies require two years to complete, from setting up the resource committee, preparing material for local Leagues and analyzing consensus reports, to writing the new position. Please weigh carefully the financial and personnel requirements of a new study.

The above guidelines are not meant to discourage the recommendation of new studies but rather to encourage discerning decision-making.

**NOTE on Ongoing Studies:** No ongoing studies

### **Action Issues**

Using existing state or national positions, discuss and decide on the issues where you want LWVMA to take concerted action in the Legislature. Before making recommendations, League members should ask themselves the following:

- What issues or statewide problems need to be addressed by the League?
- Does the League have a position on the issue?
- Can the League be especially effective in addressing the issue?
- Is it politically timely?
- Is there enough interest in the issue to sustain a high level of activity?
- Would it complement current LWVUS action priorities?
- Will your League be willing to get involved and commit to take action on the issue?

Based on local League recommendations, the LWVMA board will recommend a list of action priorities that will be voted on at the convention.

### **STEP 4**

#### **COMPLETE AND RETURN THE STATE PROGRAM PLANNING FORM**

The form appears on the next two pages.

**The deadline for submitting the form to LWVMA is February 13, 2009.**

Good luck with program planning! We look forward to your League's recommendations. Contact Carole Pelchat, LWVMA Program & Action Vice President, if you have any questions: [cpelchat@lwmva.org](mailto:cpelchat@lwmva.org), 617-523-2999.

**STATE PROGRAM PLANNING RECOMMENDATION FORM  
 2009 - 2011**

League of Women Voters of \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name & Portfolio of Person submitting the Form \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions:* Read the LWVMA Program positions (in the Appendix). Check off **retain** (meaning there is still member understanding of and agreement with the position) or **drop** (meaning the position would be dropped and no action can be taken under the position) for each program item. Those LWVUS positions that LWVMA frequently acts on at the state level are included here. Because these positions were reached as the result of national studies, the LWVMA Convention does not vote to retain or drop them. See the LWVUS publication *Impact on Issues* for details.

In addition, please indicate whether your League is using the applicable LWVMA position for local education and lobbying activities.

<b>Program Item</b>	<b>Retain</b>	<b>Drop</b>	<b>Using for local education activities</b>	<b>Using for local advocacy activities</b>
<b>Government</b>				
Citizen rights/individual liberties (LWVUS)*	<del> </del>	<del> </del>		
County government & regional planning				
Courts				
Election process/campaign finance (LWVUS)*	<del> </del>	<del> </del>		
Executive branch				
Fiscal policy				
Home rule				
Legislature				
Public personnel				
Voting rights (LWVUS)*	<del> </del>	<del> </del>		
Voting Systems				
<b>Natural resources (LWVUS)*</b>	<del> </del>	<del> </del>		
<b>Social policy</b>				
Child abuse prevention & treatment				
Corrections				
Day care				
Domestic violence				
Education				
Equality of opportunity (LWVUS)*	<del> </del>	<del> </del>		
Handgun control				
Health care				
Legalized casino gambling				
Meeting basic human needs (LWVUS)*	<del> </del>	<del> </del>		
Affordable Housing				
Reproductive choice				
Transportation				

\* These are LWVUS positions that cannot be changed by local or state Leagues.

NEW STUDY: List your League's recommendations for any new studies here in order of priority & provide a brief description with the scope and intent of each study.

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RE STUDY OR UPDATE OF AN LWVMA POSITION: List your League's recommendations for updating any current positions here in order of priority & describe why your League thinks restudying the position(s) is necessary.

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ACTION ISSUES: List your League's recommendations for action issues in order of priority.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any additional comments, attach an additional page.

**MAIL, FAX, OR EMAIL TO LWVMA OFFICE.**

**DUE: FEBRUARY 13, 2009**

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## *Appendix*

### **LWVMA PROGRAM POSITIONS 2007-2009**

#### **GOVERNMENT**

**GOAL:** Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive; that has a fair and adequate fiscal basis; that protects individual liberties established by the constitutions; and that assures opportunities for citizen participation in government decision-making...(LWVUS)

#### **CITIZEN RIGHTS/INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES (LWVUS)**

**GOAL:** Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights (1947)

#### **COUNTY GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL PLANNING (1984)**

**GOAL:** An effective state government; an intermediate level of government to solve regional problems, either through a revised county structure or an emerging regionalism; regional planning on a statewide basis; high visibility for county and/or regional government; and home rule for counties

The League supports:

- Redrawing county lines to form more natural and functional regions
- A county fiscal year to coincide with the state fiscal year
- Fiscal authority for local county advisory (financial) boards
- Administrative structures that would deliver services in an accountable and effective manner
- Evaluation of existing and potential county services in relation to cost, need, effectiveness, and appropriateness to that level of Government
- Adequate and equitable financial resources to deliver services
- Optional forms of county or regional government
- Abolition of county Government only at local discretion

#### **COURTS**

**GOAL:** A judicial system that provides equal justice for all through effective, modern administration, qualified judicial personnel, a strengthened probation service, and procedures and practices that ensure due process of law

#### **Unified Court System (1972)**

The League supports:

- Greater exercise by the Supreme Judicial Court of the powers of general superintendence of the courts for the furtherance of justice and the improvement of administration
- The establishment of an intermediate appellate court
- Strengthened management resources
- State assumption of costs and state fiscal administration
- Flexible assignment of judges to equalize the workload

#### **Selection of Judges (1972)**

The League supports:

- A nonpartisan selection system with a nominating commission composed of lawyers and lay members to propose names for all judicial appointments
- Mandatory appointment by the governor from among the names proposed
- A requirement that all judges be lawyers and give full time to their jobs
- Orientation and in-service training for all judges

#### **Judicial Conduct and Tenure (1972)**

The League supports:

- A nonpartisan judicial performance commission composed of judges, lawyers, and lay members to receive and investigate complaints from any source about judicial conduct or disability. Upon recommendation of this commission the Supreme Judicial Court shall have authority for discipline, removal, or retirement of judges.

- Mandatory retirement of judges at age 70 with provision for limited service by recall

#### Legal Counsel for Indigent People (1973)

The League supports:

- A public defender system with sufficient funding to meet the need for adequate salaries, expanded staff, and strengthened administration
- Supplementary and coordinated use of assigned counsel with public defenders subject to standardized rules and fees to assure adequate supply of counsel
- Reduced fee counsel for the near poor
- Greater involvement of the private bar and law schools
- A flexible indigency standard with guidelines so as to neither cut off the needy nor overuse free counsel

#### Pretrial Detention (1973)

The League supports:

- Expanded use of release on recognizance (ROR)
- Speedy trial
- Elimination of the bail bondsman
- Court-administered bail

#### Probation Services (1973)

The League supports:

- State recruitment, training, evaluation, and supervision of personnel
- An adequate number of probation officers, effective use of personnel, and expanded use of paraprofessionals and trained volunteers
- The development of community resources through combined local support and state subsidy

#### Indictment (1973)

The League supports:

- The defendant's option of screening by a preliminary district court hearing, or screening by a grand jury or waiver of screening, and a plea of guilty
- The defendant's right to examine the transcript of the grand jury proceedings before trial

#### Plea Bargaining (1974)

The League supports:

- Standardized procedures for negotiations between the prosecution and defense and/or defendant
- Approval of a tentative plea agreement by the court followed by formal approval in open court

#### Juries (1974)

The League supports:

- Use of a uniform, random selection method
- Elimination of legal exemptions
- Elimination of peremptory challenges
- A statewide, computerized management system
- Adequate pay and shorter service
- Public education about citizen responsibility to serve
- Use of 12-member juries in the superior courts
- Use of 6- or 12-member juries in the district courts at the option of the defendant
- use of unanimous verdicts in all criminal cases

#### Sentencing

The League supports:

- Use of adequate and accurate information about the defendant (1974)
- Required training, shared experience, and continuing education for judges about sentencing
- Legislative criteria and guidelines for sentencing (1974)
- More sentencing alternatives (1974)
- Written reasons for sentencing (1974)
- Use of a prison sentence for: offenders who commit violent crimes against the person, habitual criminals, a sanction of last resort (1985)
- The use of adequately funded and supervised alternative punishments for: offenders who commit nonviolent crimes, first offenders, non-habitual offenders, offenders who commit minor crimes, offenders where mitigating circumstances exist (1985)

- Sentence lengths that encourage rehabilitation and reintegration into society (1985)

The League opposes:

- Indeterminate sentences (1974)
- The death penalty (1985)

Merger of Probate, Juvenile, and District Court Functions as They Affect the Family (1974)

The League supports:

- Court consolidation so that jurisdiction over family matters is no longer fragmented.

Until such time as court consolidation is accomplished, the League will work for:

- Coordinated efforts among courts and agencies in dealing with family-related problems
- Continued support for the measures outlined in the existing corrections position
- Keeping status offenses under the jurisdiction of the court
- Special training for juvenile judges who would hear only juvenile cases

Family Law (1977)

The League supports:

- The legal right of adoptees to know their origins under the following conditions:  
The court directs that medical records of biological parents and general statements regarding heritage be provided the court, at the request of an adoptee who has reached the age of majority and with the consent of the biological parents, provides information to the adoptee regarding the identity of the biological parents
- The same waiting period for all grounds for divorce
- Need and ability to pay as the basis for decisions on questions of alimony, property settlement, and child support
- Statewide, uniform guidelines for alimony and child support
- Mandatory separate counsel or advocate for children when custody is an issue in contested divorce actions
- Community property measures

**ELECTION PROCESS (LWVUS)**

Campaign Finance (1974, 1982)

GOAL: Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and promote citizen participation in the political process.

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH (1963)**

GOAL: An effective state government; a strong executive branch with lines of authority and responsibility clearly defined

The League supports:

- The power of the governor to reorganize the executive departments
- The right of the governor to appoint policy-making department heads whose terms will be concurrent with the governor's
- Abolition of the Governor's Council
- A shortened ballot

**FISCAL POLICY (1969-79, 1992-93)(2008)**

GOAL: A state and local tax structure that will have an equitable impact on taxpayers and adequately support state and local services with consideration of the effect on the state and local economies; distribution of state aid in a manner that will equalize municipal resources; a comprehensive state budget system that will provide a basis for the evaluation of the cost and effectiveness of current state programs and long-range capital expenditures; up-to-date, uniform and accurate property valuation; and efficient management of the revenue collection systems.

The Fiscal Relationship between the State and Local governments (2008)

The Massachusetts LWV believes that the Fiscal Relationship between the state and local government should incorporate and balance the following principles:

**Equitability** The Massachusetts LWV currently has positions that support the distribution of state funds in a manner that helps to equalize the resources of different municipalities. The equitability principle reinforces this position and its importance was affirmed (2008).

***Flexibility in local spending*** Many municipal spending decisions are controlled either by state mandates or through laws that restrict municipal spending choices. This principle would support allowing municipalities to have more control over local spending decisions, in light of the lack of equitability in state revenue distribution.(2008)

***Flexibility in local revenue-raising*** Currently Massachusetts municipalities have very few options for raising revenue locally. This principle would support allowing municipalities more flexibility in raising revenue, in light of the lack of equitability in state revenue distribution.(2008)

***Dependability*** A dependable budget relationship between the state and municipalities would ensure that state aid to municipalities is consistent and predictable year to year. On balance, dependability is of lesser importance than the other principles.” (2008)

### Tax Structure

The League supports:

- The use of certain commonly accepted criteria in judging taxes, particularly equitability, economic effect, flexibility, ease and cost of collection, and adequacy of yield (1967, 1979, 1993)
- A greater reliance on state-collected taxes to reduce the burden on the property tax (1970)
- Enforcement of taxing income-producing properties of tax-exempt institutions (1970)
- An income tax with a graduated rate applied to income from all sources (1970)
- Equal deductions and exemptions for earned and unearned income (enacted, 1967)
- A tax on rental income
- Preferential treatment for long term capital gains for income tax purposes (1992)

- A capital gains tax that gives preferential treatment to the gain received from the sale of a primary residence (1992)
- An increase in revenue from the sales tax by broadening its base; continued provision for exemption of necessities such as food and medication, and clothing, with a lower limit (1970, 1993)
- The application of “sunset” provisions to sales tax exemptions, for the purpose of providing periodic legislative review as to whether these exemptions reflect the criteria of equitability, economic effect, ease and cost of collections, and adequacy of yield (1993)
- The broadening of the sales tax to include certain nonessential services sold to individuals when taxing those services would meet LWVMA criteria and when the greater burden would fall on those most able to pay (1993)
- A modification in the estate tax to provide for a full exemption for the surviving spouse
- A modification in the estate tax to increase the level of the no-tax status to correspond more closely to the federal estate tax exemption, and to make this level subject to periodic review
- Increased taxes on liquor and cigarettes (1979)
- User fees (1979)

The League opposes:

- A general sales tax (1970)
- The League's opposition to “new local non-property taxes by state wide mandate or local option (1993) was eliminated (2008). Proposals for new local non property taxes by state wide mandate or local option will be evaluated based on principles” in Fiscal Relationship section.
- Adoption of new, local non-property taxes by statewide mandate or local option (1993)

### Earmarking Revenues (1992)

The League opposes:

- Earmarking specific revenues for specific purposes (1992)

If an earmarking measure should be proposed and adopted, the League would support that it be:

- Statutory instead of constitutional (1992)
- Subject to periodic review (1992)
- Subject to “sunset” provisions that limit the duration of such designation and allow the reversion of the earmarked revenues to the general fund (1992)

### Tax and Spending Limits (1980)

The League opposes constitutional amendments to impose tax and spending limits (1980)

The League will evaluate statutory tax and spending limits at the state and local levels by applying the following criteria:

Tax and spending limits should:

- Allow a community to meet its own public service requirements
- Recognize and provide for varying fiscal situations
- Encourage good fiscal planning
- Meet commonly accepted criteria used in judging taxes
- Allow for proper budget procedures

Tax and spending limits should not:

- Be borne unduly by the poor
- Cause detrimental changes in the balance of power between state and local government
- Encourage spending and taxing up to the limit

### State Mandates (1979)

The League supports:

- Realistic fiscal notes on any enacted legislation that would have an impact on local budgets
- A requirement for a greater-than-majority vote of the legislature for passage of major unfunded state-mandated programs
- Adequate levels of state funding for state-mandated programs

The League opposes:

- Absolute prohibition of state-mandated programs

### Distribution of State Aid (1971)

The League supports:

- Distribution of state aid to cities and towns on an equalizing basis for public education and other municipal services
- Continuation of state categorical grants for special programs, with the distribution of such funds on an equalizing basis

### Property Tax Administration

The League supports:

- A method of levying the property tax to allow different tax burdens on different types of property (classification) with local flexibility within a range established by legislation (1980)
- The use of up-to-date and uniformly accurate property valuations to ensure that state aid distribution formulas and assessments, using local valuations as their base, are fair (1970)
- Strengthened and improved assessment procedures at both the state and local levels of government (1970)
- State publication of an up-to-date manual of assessment guidelines (1970)
- State-established qualification standards for those performing the assessment of property on both the state and local levels (1970)

### State Budgetary Procedures (1969)(2008)

The League supports:

- Transparency\* in the state budget and the budget process (2008).
- Timeliness\*\* in the fiscal relationship between the state and municipalities.(2008)

\*A transparent state budget would be clearly written, unambiguous and understandable for the general public. In addition, a transparent budget process would allow the general public to see how the budget is created.

\*\* For example, timeliness would encourage the state to provide firm information on state aid to municipalities earlier in the budget cycle.”

- A comprehensive budget system
- Identification of expenditures in terms of the services to be performed
- Evaluation of governmental programs in relation to needs
- Informed action by the legislature and interested citizen groups
- Long-range planning
- Adequate accounting and auditing systems

### **HOME RULE (1966)**

**GOAL:** An effective state Government home rule for Massachusetts cities and towns in local matters

The League supports:

- Constitutional home rule for Massachusetts cities and towns (1966)
- Sharing of functions among all levels of government
- Right of federal, state, and regional Governments to set standards of performance in broad area of public concern
- Cost-sharing by all levels of government to implement standards
- Statutory implementation of home rule

### **LEGISLATURE**

**GOAL:** An effective state government; a strong and highly visible legislative branch, districted on the basis of population into contiguous, compact, single-member districts by an appointed, bipartisan commission, and that maintains its traditional role as a democratic forum (1967)

The League supports:

- Single-member districts to carry out the one-person, one-vote concept (1974)
- An appointed, bipartisan districting commission (1973)
- A smaller membership in the House of Representatives (reduction by at least one-third of the 240 members) (1978)
- A salary level high enough to attract and keep qualified legislators (1967)
- The principle of free petition with some modification in the procedure for handling bills during the second year of the biennium (1967)
- Strict adherence to the rules of late filing

- Joint committees organized to reflect major areas of legislative concern with majority and minority parties making their own committee assignments (1967)
- Adequate legal and research help
- The Legislative Research Bureau (1967)
- Legislative procedures and a calendar that promote both efficiency and democracy (1988)
- A requirement that the Legislature pro-rogue (adjourn) no later than the election in state election years (1988)

The League opposes:

- Limiting the legislative session to less than seven months (1988)
- A filing fee (1967)

### **PUBLIC PERSONNEL (1969)**

**GOAL:** A public personnel system based upon merit principles and enlightened practices

The League supports:

- Efforts to ensure a personnel administration adequately staffed and financed, directed by qualified persons, and ultimately unified in a single agency (unification enacted in 1974)
- Improved and expedited methods of recruitment, examination, and appointment
- Improved incentives, such as proper remuneration, in-service training and wider opportunities for promotion
- Modification of veterans' preference

The League opposes:

- Improper extension of civil service coverage

### **VOTING RIGHTS (LWVUS) (1970)**

**GOAL:** Protect the right of every citizen to vote; encourage all citizens to vote

### **CITIZEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE (LWVUS) (1982)**

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.

Resolutions passed by LWVUS Convention as interpretations to the Citizen's Right to Vote Position:

- In order to ensure integrity and voter confidence in elections, the LWVUS supports the implementation of voting systems and procedures that are secure, accurate, recountable, and accessible.
- The position on the Citizens' Right to Vote can be interpreted to affirm that LWVUS supports only voting systems that are designed so that:
  1. they employ a voter-verifiable paper ballot or other paper record, said paper being the official record of the voter's intent; and
  2. the voter can verify, either by eye or with the aid of suitable devices for those who have impaired vision, that the paper ballot/record accurately reflects his or her intent; and
  3. such verification takes place while the voter is still in the process of voting; and
  4. the paper ballot/record is used for audits and recounts; and
  5. the vote totals can be verified by an independent hand count of the paper ballot/record; and
  6. routine audits of the paper ballot/record in randomly selected precincts can be conducted in every election, and the results published by the jurisdiction. (2006)

**VOTING SYSTEMS (2005)**

**GOAL:** Voting systems should be easy to use, administer and understand, encourage high voter turnout, encourage real discussion on issues, promote minority representation, and encourage candidates to run.

When electing someone to a single executive office at the state level, such as governor or attorney general, including primary and general elections, the voting system should require the winner to obtain a majority of the votes.

The League supports instant runoff voting. Cost and complexity make two-round runoff not acceptable.

**NATURAL RESOURCES (LWVUS)**

**GOAL:** Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationship of air quality, energy, land use, waste management and water resources (1986)

**SOCIAL POLICY**

**GOAL:** Promote social and economic justice, secure equal rights for all and combat discrimination and poverty (1980)

**CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT (1991)**

**GOAL:** The prevention of child abuse and neglect; the protection and care of children experiencing abuse and neglect

The League supports:

- A significant role played by Government in ensuring meaningful and adequately funded services to children experiencing abuse and neglect, and to their families.
- Programs and policies that emphasize the safety and protection of the child, with family preservation as an important, but subordinate goal
- A strong focus on child abuse prevention including education programs for both children and adults
- An extension of the statutes of limitations for bringing up accusations of child abuse
- Measures to minimize the trauma suffered by children in child abuse proceedings, including the following revisions of standard courtroom procedures:
  - Scheduling priority given to child abuse cases

- Videotape and closed-circuit television testimony of the child permitted in conjunction with procedures to protect the rights of the accused
- Limited hearsay exceptions allowed in conjunction with clear judicial guidelines to ensure the reliability of witnesses and preserve the rights of the accused
- Measures taken to provide a courtroom atmosphere that is not intimidating to children
- Special training for judges and other investigation and judicial personnel in dealing sensitively with children
- Development of legislative sentencing guidelines for child abuse perpetrators, with therapy as an integral part of the sentence

## **CORRECTIONS**

**GOAL:** A sound corrections system that provides opportunities for the rehabilitation of the adult and juvenile offender (pre-1965)

The League supports:

- Measures to protect the civil and individual rights of the offender and to promote the offender's rehabilitation through individualized treatment (pre-1965)
- Legislation to separate administrative functions from areas of professional judgment and to delineate clear lines of authority and accountability in the state agency responsible for juvenile programs (pre-1965)
- Measures to provide competitive salaries for trained personnel and measures to implement public personnel standards (pre-1965)
- Programs in existing institutions and in communities for prevention, detection, and treatment of juvenile delinquency (1975)
- Measures that provide sufficient prison space to ensure humane living conditions for prisoners (pre-1965)
- Measures that provide sufficient prison space at the minimum security and pre-release levels to permit the gradual rein-

tegration of the prisoner into society (1985)

- Programs within the Department of Corrections that gradually allow the prisoner more freedom and more responsibility as merited (1985)
- Programs that provide supervision and support upon release from prison (1985)
- Programs for women within the Department of Corrections that include job training education, and training for parenting (1985)
- Separate facilities for the female mentally ill and criminally insane (1985)
- Improved opportunities for mother-child contact (1985)
- Access to an adequate range of reintegration services for female inmates (1985)

## **DAY CARE (1984)**

**GOAL:** A coordinated state policy for quality day care for the children of Massachusetts with adequate funding for implementation by the responsible state agencies

The League supports:

- The development of a state policy on child day care programs. The policy should coordinate such functions as licensing, funding, regulation, and enforcement; and it should expedite communication between agencies, providers, and consumers.
- Minimum standards of quality for child day care programs including:
  - a safe and clean physical environment
  - appropriately trained, qualified, and compensated day care center staffs and family day care providers
  - suitable ratio of staff to children
  - adequate programs and curriculum
- The state licensing of family day care, group day care centers, and after school day care with clear procedures for such licensing
- Adequate staffing and funding of state agencies responsible for enforcement of state licensing requirements and regulations

- State regulation of family day care, group day care, and after-school child care programs that would include licensing requirements, space restrictions, the number of children in a program, the qualifications of providers, staff, and supervisors, staff ratios, health care, nutrition, safety, equipment, records and confidentiality, admission policies, parental permission, and information to parents
- Limiting state support of day care to children of low-income families, children of handicapped parents, handicapped children, or children in need of protective services. State support for child day care could take the form of direct subsidies or vouchers to individuals for purchasing services, funding programs or technical assistance. The private sector should be encouraged to support child day care.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (1993)**

GOAL: The prevention of domestic violence; a strong statewide response to domestic violence that is integrated, interdisciplinary, and adequately funded, involving all segments of the criminal justice system, the medical community, the schools, social services, and the private sector, with a primary focus on the safety of victims.

The League supports:

#### Police

- Ongoing training about domestic violence of all police
- Policies favoring the use of arrest as a preferred response to a domestic violence incident
- Carefully followed procedures for gathering and preserving evidence, so that cases can be prosecuted even if victims refuse to testify

#### Courts

- Ongoing training about domestic violence of all judges and court personnel
- Expedited court resolution of domestic violence cases

- The timely sharing of relevant information among courts, as well as with other parties in the criminal justice system
- Consideration by the probate court of a history of domestic abuse when making divorce, child custody and visitation decisions

#### District Attorneys

- Statewide availability of well-trained and funded victim witness advocates
- Training about domestic violence of district attorney staff
- Policies encouraging prosecution, even when victims are unwilling to testify

#### Probation

- Training about domestic violence of all probation officers
- Strict monitoring of compliance with probation
- Sanctions for probation violation

#### Medical Community

- Training of medical personnel in recognizing signs of domestic violence and treating victims
- Clearly defined protocols for treating domestic violence victims
- An educational role played by medical providers
- Provision of support services, such as social service referrals, support groups and literature

#### Schools

- Educational programs and policies, beginning in the earliest grades, that focus on violence prevention, conflict resolution and self-esteem building

#### Services to Victims

- Coordinated and well-publicized services for victims and their families, including:
  - shelters
  - transitional and long-term affordable housing
  - counseling and support groups
  - interpreters
  - hotlines
  - job training

- Involvement of community groups and the clergy in speaking out against domestic violence, making referrals and providing services
- Special attention system wide paid to the needs of child victims/witnesses

#### Programs for Batterers

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing programs
- Research into other treatment methods

#### Other

- Public campaigns to raise awareness of domestic violence

The League opposes:

- Glorification of violence in the media

### **EDUCATION**

GOAL: Equal access to education (LWVUS 1967)

#### Statewide Standards (1967)

The League supports:

- The principle that the state Board of Education should set minimum educational standards for local public systems with reasonable criteria for implementation
- The principle that the state Board of Education should provide services to assist local schools and to motivate them to improve the quality of education
- Reasonable measures to implement these services
- Adequate teacher certification

#### Equal Opportunity

The League supports:

- Increased school aid to localities on an equalizing basis (1948)

#### Fiscal Autonomy (1977)

The League supports:

- Fiscal autonomy of the Department of Education within the appropriation granted by the legislature
- Financial independence of school committees

The League opposes:

- Measures that require school committees to set tax rates and send out tax bills to fund school department budgets

#### School Committee/Teacher Relationships

The League supports:

- Public comment before collective bargaining contract proposals are drafted, publication of the proposals before negotiations begin, and progress reports on negotiations (1976)
- School committee authority to set education policy (1976)
- Provisions in the law for the evaluation of all professional school personnel on a regular basis through the use of specified procedures (1986)

#### Higher Education (1961)

The League supports:

- Measures to strengthen the state-supported institutions of higher education, including administrative independence with respect to budget and personnel
- A sound program of state-supported two-year colleges under the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges

#### Education Reform (2001)

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts believes that all students have an equal right to education. The League further recognizes that an educated citizenry is a vital component of a democratic society and an invaluable tool of a thriving economy. Statewide curriculum standards benefit the students of the Commonwealth by providing a common basis of instruction for all students no matter where they live and greatly reduce the negative impact on those students whose place of residence changes during their school years. Well-crafted standards should challenge and raise academic performance of all students while taking into account differences in ability and learning styles.

#### *Curriculum standards*

The League supports:

- Statewide curriculum standards for all public schools that are challenging, age-appropriate and developed through a

process that includes participation by classroom teachers, educators from all levels, business people, and recognized experts in the given field of study.

- The establishment of a regular process of review and revision. Such a process should allow for feedback to and from teachers and the community to be made in a timely and orderly manner. Once accepted by the State Board of Education, standards should be allowed to remain in place long enough to allow for consistency and continuity of classroom instruction.
- Standards that recognize different levels of student ability.
- The principle that curriculum standards allow for flexibility and enhance the ability of individual teachers to choose the approach best suited to the needs of their students. The standards should not bar individual school districts from introducing additional material not specifically covered under the curriculum standards. Care must be taken to see that standards remain as broad guidelines rather than specific instructional outlines.
- The right of individual school districts to be able to set higher (but not lower) standards than those set by the state.

The League opposes:

- The introduction of statewide mandated textbooks or other materials.

#### *Assessment*

The League supports:

- The use of a state designated test (such as the MCAS in use in 2002) that is based on the approved curriculum standards, as an important tool for measuring progress. Such a test should not be the sole instrument of student assessment.
- The right of individual school districts to be able to use such additional methods of assessment as are favored by the community and are appropriate to the student body. These may include nationally distributed tests, portfolios of student work, and the results of course

exams and other forms of assessment as are normally given by teachers.

- The development of assessment measures which might be more appropriate to students who attend vocational or other specialized school programs.

The Leagues opposes:

- Exempting such students from meeting at least the minimum curriculum standard.

#### *Graduation requirements*

The League supports:

- The requirement that in order to graduate from high school all students must demonstrate the ability to meet minimum state curriculum standards.
- Multiple criteria for graduation including a passing score on a state designated test or a validated alternative, satisfactory completion of course requirements, and any other graduation requirements that are determined by the local district and approved by the Department of Education.
- That alternative methods for determining that students meet minimum state standards for graduation should be available as a substitute for passing the state test.
- The awarding of appropriate forms of certification to students who may, due to severe disability, be incapable of passing the state test. Such certification should reflect the student's other achievements such as attendance, and progress toward goals.

#### *Assistance*

The League supports:

- Measures to aid students and districts that have difficulty in meeting state standards.
  - Such measures must include early intervention and remediation for students who appear to be in danger of failing state tests and help for teachers and districts in meeting the needs of such students.
  - Students should be allowed reasonable opportunities to retake exams.

A process of appeal to the State should be implemented for students who fail the state test (currently the MCAS) but whose test scores or demonstrated abilities appear to be on the borderline.

- State supported on-line help for students should be continued and other avenues explored. The League recognizes that it is the responsibility of students and parents to take advantage of the help being offered.
- Adequate funding and expertise from the State to all districts to aid in the above measures. Such funding should be based on the demonstrated needs of those districts and should not be subtracted from such state aid as might be due the district for other needs.

The League opposes:

- Any effort to use test results as a punitive measure against individual school districts, students, or teachers. The emphasis should be on encouraging and facilitating success.
- Any measure that might encourage poorly performing students to leave school before graduation.

#### School Choice (1994)

The League opposes:

- Statewide interdistrict public school choice

If statewide interdistrict public school choice were established, the League would consider the following features essential:

- Equalizing, consistent, and mandatory state funding for public school districts
- No punitive loss of state aid to sending schools, but oversight and assistance designed to improve problem areas, in order to protect students who remain
- Clear, timely, easily-obtainable information about the process by which students apply for admission to receiving schools, and about criteria used to assess applicants for admission, made available in every language used in the school district; parent participation in decision

making when process and criteria are established

- Vigorous and adequately funded outreach programs to provide parents with timely and accurate information available in every language used in the school district, about the choice program and about individual schools
- Admission and assessment of choice students designed to achieve equality and student body diversity with equal access for all who apply in a timely manner; transportation programs to assure such access
- Impartial periodic evaluation of the educational effectiveness of school choice for both sending and receiving schools

#### Special Education (1999)

The League supports:

- The principle that special education programs should ensure that students are educated to reach their full individual potential, learning to the best of their abilities the skills they will need to lead productive lives as informed and contributing citizens in their communities.
- The following measures that are vital to the success of special education programs:
  - comprehensive outreach and assessment to identify and serve children in need of special education services as early as possible
  - review and, if needed, revision of the processes and procedures used to identify children in need of special education services to ensure their effectiveness and accuracy; appropriate and on-going training of regular education teachers and staff to address the needs of special education students in their classrooms;
  - the development of practical and timely measurements that the public can use to calculate the effectiveness of special education programs;
  - widely disseminated and clear communications with parents and educators about the availability and

- applicability of special education services; and
- the principle that local school districts should be responsible for the provision of a full range of services to special education students in order to meet the goals of their Individual Education Plans

#### *Financing Special Education (2000)*

The League supports:

- The principle that federal and state governments assume the major burden of the costs (including transportation) associated with special education mandates
  - Funding should be based on actual costs rather than arbitrary formulas
  - The federal government should fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to the maximum amount provided under law
  - Local financial responsibility for the costs of individual students should be capped; the state should fund costs in excess of the cap
  - There should be a state funding mechanism in place to aid local school districts in meeting extraordinary costs due to unexpected special education enrollments
  - When feasible, local school districts should access other existing sources of funding (e.g. Medicaid, private medical insurance, grants, etc.)

#### **EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY (LWVUS)**

The League supports:

- Equal access to education, employment and housing
- Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA (1989)

#### **HANDGUN CONTROL**

GOAL: Elimination of the private possession of handguns (1974) and assault weapons (1989)

The League supports:

- Limitation of the sale and possession of handguns and assault weapons to law enforcement and military personnel

- A possible exception for sportsmen if the guns are used and stored away from the home under controlled conditions

Until such time as a ban on the private possession of handguns and assault weapons becomes law, the League supports:

- Improved and standardized licensing procedures
- Training in the use of handguns and assault weapons and the responsibilities of ownership
- Education of the public to the dangers of the handgun in the home
- Strict enforcement of the present laws concerning handgun ownership
- Measures to encourage the removal of all handguns and assault weapons from the home and street

#### **HEALTH CARE (LWVUS)**

Statement of Position on Health Care as Announced by National Board, April 1993:

GOALS: The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents. Other U.S. health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care.

BASIC LEVEL OF QUALITY CARE: Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care. Dental, vision and hearing care also are important but lower in priority. The League believes that under any system of health care reform, consumers/ patients should be permitted to purchase services or insurance coverage beyond the basic level.

FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATION: The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums.\* As the United

States moves toward a national health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League. The League supports administration of the U.S. health care system either by a combination of the private and public sectors or by a combination of federal, state and/or regional government agencies.

The League is opposed to a strictly private market-based model of financing the health care system. The League also is opposed to the administration of the health care system solely by the private sector or the states.

**TAXES:** The League supports increased taxes to finance a basic level of health care for all U.S. residents, provided health care reforms contain effective cost control strategies.

**COST CONTROL:** The League believes that efficient and economical delivery of care can be enhanced by such cost control methods as:

- the reduction of administrative costs,
- regional planning for the allocation of personnel, facilities and equipment,
- the establishment of maximum levels of public reimbursement to providers,
- malpractice reform,
- the use of managed care,
- utilization review of treatment,
- mandatory second opinions before surgery or extensive treatment,
- consumer accountability through deductible and co-payments.

**EQUITY ISSUES:** The League believes that health care services could be more equitably distributed by:

- allocating medical resources to underserved areas,
- providing for training health care professionals in needed fields of care,
- standardizing basic levels of service for publicly funded health care programs,
- requiring insurance plans to use community rating instead of experience rating,
- establishing insurance pools for small businesses and organizations.

**ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES TO INDIVIDUALS:** The League believes that the ability of a patient to pay for services should not be a consideration in the allocation of health care resources. Limited resources should be allocated based on the following criteria considered together: the urgency of the medical condition, the life expectancy of the patient, the expected outcome of the treatment, the cost of the procedure, the duration of care, the quality of life of the patient after treatment, and the wishes of the patient and the family.

\*commonly known as the "single-payer" approach, as explained in the LWVUS 2004-6 "Impact On Issues," p.66

### **HEALTH CARE (LWVMA)**

**GOAL:** An affordable health care system that provides equal access to quality health care for all (1983)

The League supports:

- A state and regional health care planning system that will set guidelines for allocation of health care resources in Massachusetts
- Development of a state health plan by regional planning committees with final coordination and implementation at the state level
- Coordination of planning, financing and regulation so that goals of the plan are accomplished
- Public financing of health care provided by federal and state taxes for people who cannot pay
- Citizen participation in planning, coordinating, financing, regulating, managing, and monitoring including consumer representation on planning committees
- Consumer education on maintaining health, use of the health care system, costs, and patients' rights
- Emphasis on preventive medicine, use of alternative settings, individual responsibility for health maintenance, control of environmental hazards, and consumer education

- Rigorous monitoring on a regular basis by government, citizens and the health care community
- Procedures for licensing, accreditation and certification of institutions and professionals that assure competence and reasonable standards in the practice of health care
- Improving access to health care by removing geographic, linguistic, and cultural barriers

### **LEGALIZED CASINO GAMBLING**

GOAL: Opposition to establishment of legalized casino gambling in Massachusetts (1982)

If casino gambling became legal, the League would support:

- Limited locations causing the least detrimental social and environmental impact, with acceptable road access and public transportation, and as part of a resort hotel complex sited with both local town and regional support
- Rigid standards set by the state, possibly including hours of operation, dress codes, age limits for employment and participation, licensing of employees, relationships of gaming industry to public officials, credit and junket restrictions, and liquor regulations
- Allowing stricter local regulations; requiring that the establishment comply with local zoning bylaws, building codes and public safety requirements
- Especially created gaming commission (separate from Lottery Commission) to issue gaming licenses with approval by local town governing bodies; commission members not all coterminous with governor, and a separation of the bodies granting licenses and those responsible for oversight and audit
- All costs for license investigation and supervision paid from monies collected in non-refundable filing, and licensing fees
- Percent of taxation on industry winnings more than 7% and as much as 20%
- All revenues collected by state, a portion returned to the communities impacted

and demonstrating need; remaining monies returned to the state's general fund

### **MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS (LWVUS)**

GOAL: Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families (revised 1989)

### **Affordable Housing (LWVMA 2008)**

GOAL: Access to decent housing and a suitable living environment affordable for all.

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The League supports programs, policies and regulations to address the housing needs of low- and moderate-income families and individuals, which should include:

- Income eligibility requirements for the purchase and rental of subsidized affordable housing that are adjusted periodically to reflect current economic factors
- Reasonable asset limitations for income-eligible households purchasing or renting subsidized affordable housing that take into consideration assets needed for retirement
- Periodic review of income and asset limitations and eligibility requirements
- Definitions of units eligible for inclusion on each community's Subsidized Housing Inventory that allow for the counting of units that are priced to be affordable but would not be included under the state's traditional definition of affordable housing; however, there should be legally binding agreements that require all such eligible units remain affordable long-term and restricted to income-eligible households
- Restrictions on affordable rental and ownership housing units so that the units remain affordable in perpetuity
- Streamlined permitting procedures for Smart Growth incentive programs that effectively encourage the use of Smart Growth principles, with funding sources that are consistent, reliable, and predictable

## **REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES**

GOAL: Freedom of individuals to make informed reproductive decisions based on their own convictions and beliefs (1972)

The League supports:

- Emphasis on preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies
- Sex education in the schools and community
- Access to family planning information, services and devices for all who want them
- Wide distribution of information about contraception and sterilization
- Treating abortion as a medical procedure to be decided upon by a woman and her physician
- Public funding for birth control and abortion services for the poor
- Research on birth control methods

The League opposes:

- Restrictive birth control and abortion laws

## **TRANSPORTATION (1975)**

GOAL: A statewide public transportation service, accessible to all, that provides access to jobs, housing, and services while creating minimum disruption of the environment; public monies allocated flexibly to meet public transportation needs

### Decision-making

The League supports:

- Basing transportation decisions on full information and data provided to the public and decision makers, with special emphasis on need for service, alternate modes, and cost and benefits
- Strengthening regional decision making by measures that provide maximum citizen and local government comment

- Informed and effective involvement of citizens in decision making through provisions for ongoing participation from the earliest planning stages, and widespread notification of public meetings held at times and places convenient for interested citizens
- Measures to promote convenient, reliable, safe, clean, and well-publicized services

### Funding

The League supports:

- Placing all transportation monies in a general transportation fund that is available to all modes
- Allocating funds on the basis of service needs
- Allocating funds in a manner that will equalize municipal and/or regional resources
- Funding policies that encourage increased availability and quality of public transportation and provide incentives for cost effectiveness

### Fares

The League supports:

- A fare system partially financed by the user
- Fare experiments that help meet needs of communities and users, and provide incentives to increase ridership

### Authorities

The League supports:

- Using, for public transportation purposes, authority revenues in excess of those needed for operating and maintenance costs
- Making the authorities more accountable to both the state and the public