

WELCOME TO THE
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY
MEMBERSHIP BOOKLET



Informed and active citizens joining together to explore common problems and identify shared goals, can resolve the tough issues that confront our community, our nation, and our world.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan citizen organization, [open to both women and men], encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League does not support or oppose any political parties or candidates. It achieves its goals through year-round voter service activities, and study of and action on issues selected by its members on the local, state, and national levels.

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PRINCIPLES OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS (LWV)

www.lwv.org; *Impact on Issues*; <http://www.lwv.org/content/principles>

The League of Women Voters believes:

- *In representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.*
- *That all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.*
- *That democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.*
- *That every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.*
- *That efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.*
- *That responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.*
- *That cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.*

WHAT IS THE LEAGUE?

PURPOSE

- To encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government.
- To increase understanding of major public policy issues.
- To secure public policies that promote LWV goals reached through member participation and agreement.

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HISTORY

The League of Women Voters (LWV) came into being in 1920, the year suffrage was written into the U.S. Constitution. Carrie Chapman Catt was the founder. The League grew out of the National Women's Suffrage Association, which spear-headed the 72-year drive to get the vote for women. As its first task, the League sought to help the 20 million newly enfranchised women to carry out their new voting and civic participation responsibility. The scope was later expanded to include service to all citizens.

ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP

The League functions on three levels – national, state, and local. There is one National League in Washington, D.C., state Leagues in each state, and numerous local Leagues. Joining the League at any level automatically confers membership at all three levels – local, state, and national. Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to women and men who support the purpose and principles of the League of Women Voters and provides the opportunity to be actively involved in local, state, and national issues. Voting members are citizens at least 18 years of age. Household memberships are available for two members living at the same address. Honorary members are persons who have been members for 50 years or more. Honorary members do not pay dues.

WHAT DOES THE LEAGUE DO?

NONPARTISAN VOTER SERVICE AND CITIZEN EDUCATION

Voter Service refers to nonpartisan, year-round activity to help citizens be politically effective and to encourage their participation in the political process. Registering voters, sponsoring candidate forums, and presenting factual, nonpartisan voting and election information (e.g. Voters' Guides with offices to be filled, candidates, voting procedure, ballot propositions) are basic voter service activities.

The League never supports or opposes any political party or candidate for elective office, but encourages its members, as individuals, to take part fully in the political process.

STUDIES AND PROGRAM

Study: The Leagues at each level choose issues for their members to study. Criteria considered when selecting a study program:

- The issue must be one on which governmental action is needed.
- The issue must fall within the principles of the LWV.
- Funds, time and people must be available to do a thorough job.
If agreement is reached by the membership, after a thorough study of the pros and cons of an issue, then the League has a position and can take action.

Program:

The program of the League is determined by its members and consists of national, state, and local governmental issues, chosen by consensus for study and action. Consensus is the basis of all League positions, which in turn are used as a platform for lobbying the government, on the local, state and national levels.

Impact on Issues provides the official statements of League public policy positions for each program area. Go to the national LWV website, www.lwv.org, to view or print. The League of Women Voters of New York State (LWV-NYS), like the national LWV, reviews its program every two years, at its convention. Go to www.lwvny.org to view or print the state positions.

ACTION AND ADVOCACY ON NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES:

Action includes lobbying, testifying at public hearings, holding public meetings and forums, writing letters to public officials and 'Letter to the Editor', working in coalitions, monitoring elections and other government activities, writing publications and press releases, holding press conferences, litigating to clarify laws in the public interest, and disseminating information to the public on national, state, and local public policy issues that the League has positions on.

HOW DOES THE LEAGUE FINANCE ITS ACTIVITIES?

The League is a not-for-profit, but not a tax-exempt organization, due to its lobbying activities. Every local League adopts a budget, which includes support for the State and National League, the per member payment (PMP).

Fiscal Year:

The fiscal year runs from April 1st –March 31st

Not Tax-Deductible Funding:

Membership dues and contributions, paid to the LWV Chautauqua, are not tax-deductible.

Tax-Deductible Contributions:

Tax-deductible contributions can be made by writing a separate check payable to the “LWV Education Fund” on the MEMO line of the check to ensure that the correct fund is credited.

Tax-exempt organizations with 501(c)3 status receive tax-exempt contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals that are used for education projects and programs. The funds are not used for lobbying or to support legislation. The LWVUS Education Fund and the LWVNYS Education Foundation operate at the national and state levels.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS 2016 – 2018
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

Source: Impact on Issues; www.lwv.org/files/Impact-on-Issues-2016-2018.pdf;

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote - Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation - Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

Election Process

Apportionment - Support apportionment of districts for Congress and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

Redistricting - Support redistricting processes and enforceable standards that promote fair and effective representation at all levels of government with maximum opportunity for public participation.

Money in Politics - Campaign finance regulation should enhance political equality for all citizens, ensure transparency, protect representative democracy from distortion by big money, and combat corruption and undue influence in government. The League believes that campaign spending must be restricted but not banned. The League supports public financing, full disclosure, abolishing SuperPACs and creating an effective enforcement agency.

Selection of the President - Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct-popular-vote. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.

Citizen Rights

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation - Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision-making).

Individual Liberties - Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.

Constitutional Amendment Proposals - In addition to League positions, consideration should be given to whether a proposal addresses matters of abiding importance, makes our political system more democratic or protects individual rights, could be achieved by less difficult legislative or political approaches, and is more suited to a constitutional and general approach than to a statutory and detailed approach .

Constitutional Conventions - Concerned that there are many unresolved questions about a Constitutional Convention. Certain conditions must be in place: limited to a single specific topic, full transparency, delegates selected by population, and voting by delegates not by state.

Public Policy on Reproductive Choices - Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Congress and the Presidency

Congress

Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision making capability and effective performance.

The Presidency

Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

Privatization

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.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

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.

Trade

Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries

Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

Arms Control

Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

Military Policy and Defense Spending

Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

Natural Resources

Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

Resource Management

Promote resource conservation, stewardship and longrange planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control

Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

Air Quality - Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

Energy - Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

Land Use - Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.

Water Resources - Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

Waste Management - Promote policies that reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes).

Nuclear Issues - Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

Public Participation

Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

Agriculture Policy

Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

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.

SOCIAL POLICY

Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

Equality of Opportunity

Education, Employment and Housing - Support equal access to education, employment and housing.

Equal Rights - Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.

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 and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that 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 and health insurance.

Health Care

Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents, including behavioral health, and 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 and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and 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 living environment for every American family.

Child Care

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

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

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

Violence Prevention

Support violence prevention programs in communities.

Gun Control

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

Urban Policy

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

Death Penalty

The LWVUS supports abolition of the death penalty.

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.

Human Trafficking

Oppose all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

PRINCIPLES

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

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS LWVNYS 2015

ELECTION LAW

UNDER LWVUS POSITIONS

Support measures to protect, extend and encourage the use of the franchise, including paperless and Election Day registration, no-excuse absentee and in-person early voting. Restore integrity to the election process – specifically support for uniformity in election laws and procedures in their implementation and enforcement; promote measures that ensure the integrity of all ballots; support ballot access and fair campaign practices.

Support comprehensive campaign finance reform, including public financing of campaigns.

Support continuation of Fusion Voting in New York State whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed. Opposition to term limits for members of the NYS Legislature.

Oppose term limits for NYS statewide elected officials.

GOVERNMENT

UNDER LWVUS POSITIONS

Support citizen rights, including reproductive rights.

Support effective regulation of lobbying and ethics.

Support standards to ensure equitable representation in the State legislature and Congress.

Support measures that provide representation for legislative districts in case of a vacancy.

Support responsive and responsible legislative processes which increase the role of the individual member and the committee system.

Support procedural reforms in the constitutional convention process to promote openness and nonpartisanship. Support of the consolidation of government/shared services when it promotes effective and efficient operation of government.

HEALTH CARE

Support measures that assure a basic level of quality physical and mental health care, including regulatory incentives to encourage development of cost-effective alternative methods of delivery; funding for health promotion and disease prevention programs; provisions for effective citizen participation in health policy decisions.

Support measures that enable individuals to assume responsibility for their own health and to participate in decisions, including extraordinary life-extending procedures.

Support uniform eligibility and coverage of basic health care costs through public financing with single payer concept as an acceptable approach to implementing League positions on equitable access and cost containment.

JUDICIAL

Support a unified state court system with improved provisions for judicial selection.

Support statewide guidelines for law enforcement at all levels to prevent racial and economic profiling.

Support measures to improve pretrial procedures in the criminal courts.

Support measures that promote a fair and efficient jury system.

Support rights of indigent defendants to representation at public expense.

Support alternatives to incarceration.

Oppose the death penalty, with life without parole as the primary alternative.

NATURAL RESOURCES

UNDER LWVUS POSITIONS

Support protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest, including energy conservation and energy options from renewable sources.

Support measures to achieve watershed protection including limiting pesticide use and applying Best Management Practices.

Support multi-level governmental cooperation for land resource management. Support for a proactive role for New York State in regional land use planning, containing urban sprawl and protecting sensitive areas.

Support reconditioning of the New York State Erie/Barge Canal System and its development for recreational uses.

Support preservation and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem.

SOCIAL POLICY

UNDER LWVUS POSITIONS

Support equality of opportunity, meeting basic human needs, childcare, energy-efficient and environmentally sound public transit, and gun control.

Support measures to meet the needs for affordable and accessible housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities

Oppose human forced labor and sex trafficking.

STATE FINANCES

Education

Support reforms for greater equity in education financing (K-12) for both pupils and taxpayers.

Support raising funds to provide New York's children with a sound basic education through increases in the New York State personal income tax, implemented in a progressive fashion.

Support replacement of the existing local residential property tax relief programs in which relief goes to all with programs based on need, with annual cost of living adjustment.

Oppose in principle the use of public funds to support non-public schools (K-12).

Oppose any increase in the maximum number of charter schools without improvements to the Charter School Act.

State Finances

Support funding of public higher education and the existing formula for financing the community system, 1/3 tuition, 1/3 state aid, and 1/3 county support.

Support uniform equitable assessment and property tax system.

Support measures to provide for openness and accountability in the operation of the New York State public authority system.

Support a timely and responsive state budget.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Support measures that hold marriage to be an economic partnership with a presumption of equality between the spouses.

Oppose measures that contain a presumption of joint custody of the children.

Support equity in employment laws and practices and equal pay for jobs of comparable worth.

Support measures to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic violence.

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED LEAGUE TERMS

ACTION: *Promoting the League's positions on local, state and national public policy issues to government officials, the media and the public.*

ACTION ALERT: *Request from the LWVUS or state League to take action in support of a League position.*

ANNUAL MEETING: *Local year-end business meeting to elect officers and directors, vote on bylaw changes and vote on the proposed annual budget.*

CONSENSUS: *Collective opinion of a substantial number of League members, representative of the membership as a whole, after objective study of an issue.*

CONCURRENCE: *Agreement by League members with a position on an issue reached by a small group of members or by another League.*

CONVENTION: *A state or national League meeting held every other year at which delegates elect officers and directors for the biennium, adopt program, make bylaw changes and adopt a budget, usually for one year. Local Leagues send delegates to state convention; local and state Leagues send delegates to national convention.*

COUNCIL: *Assembly of delegates held in alternate years to adopt a budget and assess program development. Local Leagues send delegates to state council; state Leagues send delegates to national council.*

EDUCATION FUND: *The tax-deductible arm of national, state, and large local Leagues, handling funds to be used only for educational purposes, not for action on issues.*

HONORARY LIFE MEMBER: *A person who has been a member for 50 years or more. Life members are excused from dues payment and their Leagues pay no per member payment (PMP) for them.*

PMP: *Acronym for **Per Member Payment**, the amount of money paid to the LWVUS and the state League on behalf of each member.*

POSITION: *A statement of the League's point of view on an issue, arrived at through member study and agreement (consensus or concurrence), approved by the appropriate board and used as a basis for League action.*

PRINCIPLES: *Governmental standards and policies supported by the League as a whole. They constitute the authorization for adoption of program at all levels.*

PROGRAM: *Selected governmental issues chosen by members at the local, state and national levels for study and action.*

VOTING MEMBERS: *All League members 18 years of age or older.*

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of Chautauqua County

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