



WHERE WE STAND

2023–2025 PROGRAM

LWVIL President: Becky Simon

Edited by: Letina Brady Pettis, Sarah Bury, Kathy Cortez, Jacquelyn Casazza, Ann Courter, Laura Davis, Lorri Grainawi, Rosemary Heilemann, Carla Hillman, Claudia Jackson, Bill Koehl, Barbara Laimins, Donna Limper, Jim McGrath, Margaret O'Hara, and Kim Reed.

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The League of Women Voters of Illinois
332 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 634
Chicago, IL 60604

312-939-5935
issues@lwwil.org
www.lwwil.org

Foreword

Where We Stand is the platform of the League of Women Voters of Illinois. It is a companion to *Impact on Issues*, the League of Women Voters of the United States' program book. Taken together, these publications and the *League Principles* form the basis for all action taken by Illinois Leagues on state and national issues.

Program

Where We Stand, covering the LWWIL state positions adopted at the 2023 Convention, is designed to help local Leagues use the state program effectively. The material is organized into four topic sections: Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy, corresponding to the order they appear in *Impact on Issues*. Each section begins with a summary of relevant LWWUS positions and major action taken by Illinois Leagues under those positions. The LWWIL positions are then listed in full, followed by a brief historical background and recent action taken, with references to the interrelationship between positions.

Procedures For Taking Action

Local Leagues are encouraged to apply national and state positions to local and/or regional issues. Before taking action on national issues, local Leagues must consult with the LWWIL Issues and Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs at issues@lwwil.org and the national League. Before taking action on statewide issues, local Leagues must consult with the LWWIL Issues and Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs. On regional issues, local Leagues must consult with all affected Leagues. See "Action Guidelines for Local Leagues" for consultation information.

Purpose

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots, multi-issue organization. Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policies of the League, male or female, may become a member of the League. The League's purposes are:

- To establish positions on public policy through member participation and agreement.
- To take concerted actions that secure policies consistent with League positions.
- To enhance citizen participation in federal, state and local government decisions.
- To increase citizen participation in the election process.

League Principles

The League of Women Voters Believes

- In representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.
- 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.
- 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 the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.
- The League of Women Voters of Illinois is committed to the principle that amendments to the federal Constitution should require only a simple majority rather than a 3/5 majority for ratification in Illinois. The federal ratification process requires approval by 2/3 of both houses of Congress and approval by 3/4 of the state legislatures for an amendment to be ratified. We agree that these stringent requirements provide sufficient protection for our Constitution. This interpretation would apply only to the federal Constitution.

Action Under Principles

The *Principles* are "concepts of government" to which the League subscribes. According to the LWVUS Bylaws, they serve as authorization for adoption of national, state and local positions and as a basis for taking action at the national, state and local levels. However, because the *Principles* are broad in scope, action based on *Principles* alone should be undertaken with caution. It is suggested that any action on the *Principles* be taken in conjunction with present League positions to which they apply and on which member agreement and understanding are known to exist.

Program Pillars For 2023–25 Advocacy

The following pillars are aimed at working toward a better democracy:

Voting Rights and Election Processes

The LWV of Illinois works to ensure free, fair and accessible elections, promote equitable voter access, protect voting by mail, voter registration, election security, and to standardize best practices and processes across election authorities. The LWV of Illinois supports initiatives which conform to our positions regarding campaign finance and ethics reform, redistricting, and abolishing the electoral college.

Environment/Climate Crisis

The LWV of Illinois advocates for policies to mitigate climate change and support the equitable and sustainable adaptation to the impacts of climate change, including: promoting renewable energy sources, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and reducing waste. The LWV of Illinois works for environmental justice and policies that ensure an equitable distribution of environmental risks and benefits across all communities. In addition, we advocate for the protection of the air, land, and water, to promote healthy ecosystems, biodiversity and a clean and healthful environment.

Equitably Meeting Basic Human Needs

The LWV of Illinois advocates for policies that equitably meet basic human needs for all residents, to include: health care, including reproductive health and behavioral health, economic support, housing, education, safety, freedom from violence, and justice. To support these initiatives, the LWV of Illinois advocates for a state revenue system that is equitable, progressive, stable, responsive, and simple.

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LWVUS Positions: Representative Government

LWVUS Position

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

LWVIL Action

2003–2005

Democracy Project

LWVIL approved a recommendation from the Issues and Action Committee to assess how well Illinois citizens were truly represented by their elected officials after the Illinois House allowed over 250 shell bills to advance to third reading with little description of substance during the Spring Session. 26 of those shell bills were then used as vehicles for substantial legislation - including budget legislation - that denied citizens and many legislators time for input. Consistent with the core mission of Making Democracy Work, the Democracy Project was designed to strengthen citizen participation and restore public confidence in our state government.

2004

League members monitored bills, including shell bills, in the General Assembly. Local Leagues' in-district legislative interviews solicited a broad range of feedback on shell bills. From these interviews, ways to empower rank and file members throughout the legislative process began to emerge.

The second phase of the project included research done by LWVIL staff who interviewed political science and policy experts for their views on the process and whether they saw opportunities for meaningful public input. LWVIL used this information to formulate a survey on the legislative process for 2005 legislative interviews. The Democracy Project Committee also interviewed the legislative leaders. In both sets of interviews, opinions were divided as to how well the system was running.

2005

Local League members conducted their annual legislative interviews using the legislative process questionnaire. At LWVIL Lobby Day in April, members met with available local legislators and acted as an "Observer Corps". Responses from legislative interviews and Lobby Day were collected and summarized.

2021

Promoting the For the People Act

The Illinois League educated and advocated for passage of the For the People Act, a federal bill to expand voting rights, change campaign finance laws, limit partisan gerrymandering, and create new ethics rules for federal officeholders. The League asked members and citizens to 1) thank Illinois senators for supporting the bill and 2) to pass the Act by reforming the filibuster. Our outreach included social media posts, newsletters, and letters to the editors of the Chicago Tribune and Sun-Times.

Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote

1982

LWVUS Position

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

LWVIL Action

Illinois Leagues worked to increase polling place accessibility for the disabled, to expand voter registration opportunities in the state, and to pass the 1993 National Voter Registration Act (Motor Voter).

2001

Local Leagues participated in the LWVUS survey of election officials during the summer and findings were published in November. At the same time, LWVIL conducted its own survey of Illinois election authorities. (See LWVIL State Election Laws section.)

2002

With LWVIL support Congress passed the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA). This major piece of legislation calls for numerous election reforms that affect many parts of the electoral process including a requirement that each state form a planning committee to help guide its implementation within the state. The LWVIL president served on Illinois' planning committee for voter education and outreach.

2020

LWVIL priorities were to maintain a safe, secure November election during the pandemic. Our focus was centered on the following

- Mailing a ballot to all registered voters, with a postage paid return envelope.
- Maintaining polling sites for those who wish to vote in person
- Expanding early voting opportunities and hours of operation
- Expanding opportunities and/or simplifying procedures to request and cast a vote by mail that are fiscally supported by both state and federal funding.
- Relaxing the deadlines to receive, count and verify provisional and mailed ballots to ensure all ballots are counted.
- Funding the acquisition of needed equipment, software and/or local election commission staff to process, track and count an anticipated increase in mailed and provisional ballots for all 108 election authorities.
- Enacting measures to ensure the safety and health of all voters, and poll workers
- Funding community education campaigns to increase awareness of options for voting and voting procedures on election day at polling places.

On Friday May 22nd, SB 1863 passed both the House and Senate of the General Assembly and signed by the Governor June, 2020. While we did not achieve our goal of all registered voters receiving a ballot by mail, significant strides in access to voting in a safe, secure environment were made due to the advocacy of LWVIL members and coalition partners.

Major Provisions of the bill for 2020 only are:

- Election Day on November 3rd 2020 becomes a State Holiday allowing schools to safely be used as polling places.
- Expanded vote-by-mail by automatically sending ballot applications to those who voted in 2018, 2019, and March 2020 either by mail or voted in person at the polls.
- New registrants or change of address registrants will be allowed to request a mail-in ballot without filing an additional application at time of registration.
- Expansion of early voting hours that will include weekends and holidays.

- Mandates a statewide vote-by-mail public education program in cooperation with Secretary of State office, State Board of Elections, and local Election Authorities.
- Curbside voting will be allowed as a safe alternative to in-person voting.
- Recruitment of younger election workers to avoid putting elderly workers at risk should there be a resurgence of Covid-19.
- Election Authorities will accept mail-in ballots even if insufficient or no postage.
- Election Authorities may establish collection sites for postage free return of mail in ballots.
- Allows Election Authorities to establish a three-member election judge panel to process (not tally) mail-in ballots as received.
- Local Election Authorities will be able to apply for reimbursement for funds incurred by implementing the bill.

SB 1863 was a step in the right direction to increasing safe, secure voter access to the polls. LWVIL Election Specialists continued to work towards the goal of a ballot being sent to every voter and make permanent the provisions of SB1863.

2021

While some LWVIL-supported bills did not advance in the General Assembly (e.g. designating the general election day as a state holiday and closing schools on election days), there were some major successes:

HB 1871 was signed into law on April 2, 2021 by Governor JB Pritzker

Major Provisions are

- Provides that in distribution of the remaining funds received under the federal Help America Vote Act, the State Board of Elections may make such funds available to election authorities for the maintenance of secure collection sites for the return of vote by mail ballots.
- Allows election authorities to establish curb-side voting for individuals to cast a ballot during early voting or on election day. Provides that an election authority's curb-side voting program shall designate at least two election judges from opposite parties per vehicle and the individual must have the option to mark the ballot without interference from the election judges.
- Requires election authorities to accept any vote by mail ballot returned, including ballots returned with insufficient or no postage.
- Allows election authorities to establish secure collection sites for postage-free return of vote by mail ballots.
- Provides for the collection and processing of vote by mail ballots submitted to collection sites. Provides that the State Board of Elections shall establish additional guidelines for the security of collection sites.

On June 17, 2021, SB 825 was signed into law by Governor JP Pritzker, further expanding access to vote.

Major provisions of the law are as follows:

- Provided dates for the 2022 General Primary election and dates to prepare for the 2022 election (repealed on January 1, 2023)
- Sheriff may establish a temporary branch polling place at County jail in counties with a population less than 3,000,000 for those being held in custody but not convicted.
- Allows for the establishment of permanent vote by mail list for all elections until a voter request is received to be removed or registers in another jurisdiction
- Each election authority maintaining a website shall begin utilizing a .gov website and address for all employees
- State Board of Elections shall prepare a one-page document explaining the process to register must be disseminated to high school age students.
- No high school may prohibit nonpartisan voter registration activities on its premises
- 90 days before any election the State Board of Elections shall provide written guidance to election authorities on ballot tracking and proper terminology to be used for requirements for voting, curbside voting, early voting, and vote by mail.
- Election Day will be known as 2022 General Day and shall be a State holiday for 2022 only.
- Election authorities shall establish one location where all voters in its jurisdiction are allowed to vote on election day during polling place hours, regardless of the precinct in which they are registered. (Effective until January 1, 2023)
- County reapportionment deadlines and procedures

- Protocol and dates for early voting, vote by mail and curbside voting

116th Congress

The League has advocated and will continue to advocate for the For the People Act which the American people want and deserve. The For the People Act addresses some of the most pressing issues facing our democracy by:

- Modernizing our voter registration system.
- Restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Curbing partisan gerrymandering; and
- Making campaign contributions more transparent
- Requiring more ethical behavior of all three branches of government.

We also supported the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which would restore provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that have been weakened by the Supreme Court:

- State laws and policies which discriminate against voters could be challenged by the Department of Justice
- The Department of Justice could prevent states with a history of discrimination from passing laws and policies designed to suppress voting.

(See also LWWIL State Election Laws/Registration and Elections.)

DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation

1982, 2000

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that citizens of the District of Columbia should be afforded the same rights of self-government and full voting representation in Congress as are all other citizens of the United States. LWVUS supports restoration of an annual, predictable federal payment to the District to compensate for revenues denied and expenses incurred because of the federal presence.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL supported the agenda of the national League at the LWVUS 2000 Convention. Local Leagues support this effort by responding to LWVUS action alerts.

The Election Process

Apportionment

1966, 1982

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that congressional districts and government legislative bodies should be apportioned substantially on population. The League is convinced that this standard, established by the Supreme Court, should be maintained, and that the U.S. Constitution should not be amended to allow for consideration of factors other than population in apportionment

LWVIL Action

The Illinois League has supported apportionment based on population and a state apportionment process open to the public. (See LWWIL State Redistricting.)

Redistricting

2016

LWVUS Position

1. Responsibility for redistricting preferably should be vested in an independent special commission, with membership that reflects the diversity of the unit of government, including citizens at large, representatives of public interest groups, and members of minority groups.
2. Every redistricting process should include:
 - a. Specific timelines for the steps leading to a redistricting plan;
 - b. Full disclosure throughout the process and public hearings on the plan proposed for adoption;
 - i. Redistricting at all levels of government must be accomplished in an open, unbiased manner with citizen participation and access at all levels and steps of the process;
 - ii. Should be subject to open meeting laws;
 - c. A provision that any redistricting plan should be adopted by the redistricting authority with more than a simple majority vote;
 - d. Remedial provisions established in the event that the redistricting authority fails to enact a plan. Specific provisions should be made for court review of redistricting measures and for courts to require the redistricting authority to act on a specific schedule;
 - i. Time limits should be set for initiating court action for review,
 - ii. The courts should promptly review and rule on any challenge to a redistricting plan and require adjustments if the standards have not been met.
3. The standards on which a redistricting plan is based, and on which any plan should be judged, must:
 - a. Be enforceable in court;
 - b. Require:
 - i. Substantially equal population,
 - ii. Geographic contiguity, and
 - iii. Effective representation of racial and linguistic minorities.
 - c. Provide for (to the extent possible):
 - i. Promotion of partisan fairness,
 - ii. Preservation and protection of “communities of interest,” and
 - iii. Respect for boundaries of municipalities and counties.
 - d. Compactness and competitiveness may also be considered as criteria so long as they do not conflict with the above criteria
 - e. Explicitly reject:
 - i. Protection of incumbents, through such devices as considering an incumbent’s address; and
 - ii. Preferential treatment for a political party, through such devices as considering party affiliation, voting history and candidate residence.

This position does not supersede any existing state League redistricting position.

Money in Politics

2016

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should:

- Enhance political equality for all citizens
- Ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process
- Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns
- Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices
- Ensure transparency and the public’s right to know who is using money to influence elections

- Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office
- Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public
- Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

The League believes that political corruption includes the following:

A candidate or office holder agrees to vote or work in favor of a donor’s interests in exchange for a campaign contribution; an officeholder or staff gives greater access to donors; an officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them; a candidate or office holder seeks political contributions implying that there will be retribution unless a donation is given; and the results of the political process consistently favor the interests of significant campaign contributors.

In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, the League supports:

Public financing of elections, either voluntary or mandatory, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits; enhanced enforcement of campaign finance laws that includes changes to ensure that regulatory agencies are properly funded, staffed, and structured to avoid partisan deadlock in the decision-making process; abolishing Super PACs and abolishing spending coordinated or directed by candidates (other than a candidate’s own campaign committee); and restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists, which may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.

Until full public financing of elections is enacted, limits on election spending are needed in order to meet the League’s goals for protecting democratic processes. Among the different entities that spend money to influence elections, the League supports the following comparative limits:

- Higher spending limits for political parties, genuinely nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote organizations and activities, and candidates spending money raised from contributors.
- Mid-level spending limits for individual citizens (including wealthy individuals), Political Action Committees (with funds contributed by individuals associated with the sponsoring organization, such as employees, stockholders, members, and volunteers), and candidates spending their own money.
- Lower spending limits for trade associations, labor unions and nonprofit organizations from their general treasury funds.
- Severely restricted spending by for-profit organizations spending from their corporate treasury funds.
- No limits on spending by bona fide newspapers, television, and other media, including the internet, except to address partisan abuse or use of the media to evade campaign finance regulations.

This position is applicable to all federal campaigns for public office—presidential and congressional, primaries, as well as general elections. It also may be applied to state and local campaigns.

Background

Federal Regulation

A series of Supreme Court decisions allow for unlimited and undisclosed money in politics.

1976 Buckley v. Valeo Ruled limits on election spending are unconstitutional.

2010 Citizens United v. FEC abolished limits on independent political spending by corporations and political committees.

2014 McCutcheon v. FEC ruled limits on contributions an individual can make over a two-year period to national party and federal candidate committees are unconstitutional.

2021 Americans for Prosperity vs. Bonta ruled political donor disclosure requirements are a burden on First Amendment rights of association.

Regulation in Illinois

In 1974, the Illinois General Assembly—in the post-Watergate era reform movement—passed a law to require the reporting of campaign receipts and expenditures (10-ILCS5/0-1). While many other states and the federal government placed limits on contributions and expenditures, prohibited corporate entities from contributing or spending on politics, and adopted public financing systems, Illinois chose to adopt a law that relied exclusively on two interrelated mechanisms to accomplish its purpose: disclosure and reporting. Candidates for public office and political party organizations were required to disclose the sources of contributions and how they spent those contributions.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL became active in Campaign Finance Reform in the mid-1990's. In 1995, LWVIL joined the Task Force on Campaign Finance Reform in Illinois, a project of Illinois Issues and the Institute for Public Affairs, to research and promote public discussion of the role of money in politics.

Following the final project report, *Tainted Democracy: How Money Distorts the Election Process in Illinois and What Must Be Done to Reform the Campaign Finance System* in January 1997, the Joyce Foundation gave a grant to the Education Fund to build a statewide organization. The Illinois Campaign for Political Reform (renamed Reform for Illinois in 2018), to promote public understanding, support, and advocacy for reforming the Illinois campaign finance system. It was formed and spun off as an entity separate from League. LWVIL has continuously worked with Reform for Illinois and other partners to educate and advocate for campaign finance reform.

2020

In addition to the most expensive governor's race in Illinois history, party leaders, megadonors and special interests used Illinois' self-funding campaign loophole—nicknamed the “millionaire's exemption”—to by-pass campaign contribution caps. In 2020 party leaders, mega donors and special interests used Illinois' self-funding campaign loophole – nicknamed the “millionaire's exemption”—to by-pass state contribution caps. Both Democrats and Republicans then transferred huge sums to their political party committees, putting concentrated political power in the hands of just a few people. In 2020, all four legislative leaders raised a combined \$44 million more than the contribution limits allow, according to a Better Government Association analysis. Rising campaign costs give the wealthy, party leaders and special interest donors an outsized influence on the outcome of elections, limiting the number and diversity of candidates.

The League has supported public financing of campaigns, campaign contribution and transfer limits (including limits on contributions from political party ad legislative caucus committees to candidate political committees in general elections), a statewide voters guide for constitutional officers, barring government officials from soliciting campaign contributions from people or businesses they regulate, setting a limit on lobbyist gifts to elected officials, prohibiting political activity by state employees on state time, creating an ethics commission, strengthening state laws regulating lobbying of state government and providing for voluntary public funding of Appellate and Supreme court election campaigns.

Illinois Campaign for Political Reform

1995

LWVIL joined the Task Force on Campaign Finance Reform in Illinois, a project of Illinois Issues and the Institute for Public Affairs, to research and promote public discussion of the role of money in politics.

1997

The final project report, *Tainted Democracy: How Money Distorts the Election Process In Illinois and What Must Be Done to Reform the Campaign Finance System*, was published in January. The LWVIL Education Fund subsequently received a Joyce Foundation grant to study the feasibility of building a statewide coalition to conduct educational outreach on the issue.

The study resulted in a two-year Joyce Foundation grant to the Education Fund beginning in September 1997, to build a statewide organization, the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform (ICPR), to promote public understanding, support, and advocacy for reforming the Illinois campaign finance system. This grant was renewed in the fall of 1999 for two years. In the spring of 2001, ICPR spun off as a separate not-for-profit entity.

Illinois Gift Ban Act**1998**

The General Assembly passed ethics and campaign finance reform legislation known as the Gift Ban Act (P.A. 90-0737) in the spring. LWVIL was generally supportive of the measure as a first step in reforming campaign finance in Illinois. A lower state court judge ruled the Ban unconstitutional because it prohibited gifts above a “nominal” value. The Illinois Supreme Court upheld the Act in May 2002.

Contributions Limits Bill**1999**

The statewide LWVIL Campaign Finance Reform Committee initiated a bill that passed the Illinois House Election and Campaign Reform Committee with a bipartisan vote, but died in the House Rules Committee.

2000

LWVIL Committee worked to forward legislation focused on public funding, a statewide voter guide and the elimination of direct corporate and union contributions.

Ethics Reform**2001**

Local Leagues circulated petitions calling for ethics reform legislation. LWVIL participated on the Illinois Voters Guide task force that presented its final report in 2001.

LWVIL initiated a second contribution limits bill and, working with the Campaign Finance Reform Coalition (CFRC), League supported legislation to ban gambling contributions to campaigns, reinstate ethics legislation and promote a statewide voters guide for constitutional officers.

2002

The League and the CFRC distributed petitions supporting ethics and asked candidates running for state constitutional office and the state legislature to sign an ethics pledge. League and CFRC worked for legislation (P.A. 92-0853) barring government officials from soliciting campaign contributions from people or businesses they regulate, license, or inspect, and setting a \$100 a year limit on lobbyist gifts to elected officials.

2003

LWVIL and CFRC supported legislation to prohibit political activity by state employees on state time, create ethics commissions with enforcement powers for both the legislative and executive branches, and increase disclosure requirements for special interest groups that buy broadcast time, among other reforms.

In the fall Veto Session, a comprehensive ethics package passed (P.A. 93-065). Local League members lobbied their legislators and LWVIL participated in a Springfield press conference along with other CFRC members.

Public Financing of Judicial Elections

After reviewing the League position on the merit selection of judges (see Constitutional Implementation and Amendments), delegates to the 2003 LWVIL Convention adopted a position allowing the League to advocate for the public financing of judicial elections which constitutes an opportunity to limit the size and type of campaign contributions as a means of combating undue influence in the election process.

Pay to Play

LWVIL strongly supported 2007 legislation to prohibit contributions from business owners to any elected officials who award them state contracts of more than \$50,000. The bill finally became law (P.A. 95-0971) late in the year, after the General Assembly overrode the Governor’s veto.

LWVIL also supported bills to strengthen state laws regulating lobbying of state government and provide for voluntary public funding of Appellate and Supreme Court election campaigns.

Additional LWVIL advocacy included written testimony submitted to the IL General Assembly Committee on Elections and Campaign Finance Reform on behalf of a campaign contribution limits bill and a statement supporting a Transparency in Government Bill that would require the Illinois Treasurer’s Office to list publicly where the state’s money is invested.

2009

Illinois Reform Commission - CHANGE Illinois

In response to corruption charges against and subsequent impeachment of the sitting governor in early 2009, the Illinois Lieutenant Governor created the Illinois Reform Commission and the General Assembly convened the Joint Committee on Government Reform. CHANGE Illinois, a new coalition of civic, business, labor, professional, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations was formed. LWWIL - along with CHANGE Illinois - called for an end to Illinois' unregulated campaign finance system and for creation of a system of campaign contribution limits, like those in use at the federal level.

2009

LWWIL presented testimony to the Joint Committee on Government Reform in March and our members contacted their legislators. The General Assembly passed HB7 which fell short of real reform. With pressure from LWWIL members, the press and the public, the governor vetoed the bill.

CHANGE Illinois and LWWIL urged the governor and legislative leaders to work together to craft stronger reform legislation to be passed during the October Veto Session. An efficient and effective law to control contributions needs the following:

- Reasonable limits applied to all individual and PAC contributions to candidates and parties;
- Limits on fund transfers among political committees, as well as coordinated expenditures on behalf of a candidate;
- Limits on contributions to candidates applied by each election cycle, not each calendar year;
- More complete and frequent disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures;
- A strengthened oversight agency with sufficient authority and resources to enforce the law, conduct random audits, and investigate and impose penalties for violations.

Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform

Both the 2009 and 2011 LWWIL Conventions, continuing work that has taken place since the late 1990's and readopted a Campaign Finance Reform Action Focus

In the fall of 2009, major campaign finance reform legislation (PA 96-0832) became law. It took effect on January 1, 2011 and changed the way in which Illinois regulates the use of money to influence political campaigns. This legislation was Illinois' first successful attempt to impose contribution limits on the amount of money that individuals, corporations, unions, associations, and PACs can give to candidates and political parties in primary and general elections. Additionally, the new law imposed some limits on the movement of money between political committees in primary elections. *However, PA 96-0832 did not provide for limits on contributions from political party and legislative caucus committees to candidate political committees in general elections.*

PA 96-0832 established a framework for more frequent disclosure of contributions and expenditures; provided for random audits by the State Board of Elections to ensure compliance with the laws; and enhanced penalties for violations of the law's provisions.

2011–2013

PA 96-0832 also created the Illinois Campaign Finance Reform Task Force (IL CFRTF) charged with considering a system of public financing by State government for the conduct and finance of election campaigns, and conducting a thorough review of the implementation of campaign finance reform legislation in Illinois and producing reports periodically.

LWWIL presented testimony to the IL CFRTF on three occasions. On 12/15/2011, LWWIL urged the Task Force to recommend that the General Assembly consider a system of public financing. LWWIL presented a statement at the 1/17/2013 hearing calling for greater transparency in elections, and for closing loopholes in Illinois' Election Code by requiring greater disclosure of independent expenditures. At the 4/22/13 hearing, LWWIL urged the IL CFRTF to recommend that the General Assembly maintain campaign contribution limits.

LWWIL opposed legislation in 2012 and 2013 to remove contribution limits in some races eroding the effectiveness of the 2009 legislation. PA 97-0766 (2012) removes limits on all contributions to all candidates running in an election where spending by an independent expenditure committee (or super PAC)

reaches a threshold amount of \$250,000 in support of a candidate in a statewide race or \$100,000 for all other elective offices. PA 98-0115 (2013) the Election Code Omnibus Bill removes contribution limits in races where *multiple* Super PACs combine to spend above \$250,000 in a statewide race or \$100,000 in any other race. Consequently, contributions limits will be lifted for more legislative and statewide races.

The LWVUS 2012 Convention adopted a motion to support a comprehensive program to educate members and communities on the issue of campaign finance. The LWVUS appointed a Campaign Finance Task Force to serve as a resource to the LWVUS Board on campaign finance issues including short-term and long-term strategies for reform. In April 2013 the LWVUS reaffirmed that it is not supporting a constitutional amendment to reverse the Citizens United v. FEC ruling dealing with independent campaign expenditures at this time because it has not yet found a proposed amendment that can be supported within our positions.

2014

League members were asked to contact the IRS about proposed regulations for 501(c)(4) organizations that would significantly change what kind of political activity and how much of that activity a 501(c)(4) organization could carry out. The regulations would rein in the secret “dark money” in elections but would undermine the League’s ability to conduct truly nonpartisan voter service activities.

LWVUS

The 2014 Convention adopted a comprehensive program combining study and review of key, specific structures of American democracy consisting of a study of the process of amending the U.S. Constitution, including constitutional conventions, and a review and update of the League position on campaign finance. Local Leagues will participate in the study in 2015–16. A new Campaign Finance position should be adopted by LWVUS prior to the June 2016 convention.

2015

The League supported (PA) 99-0437 legislation that closed a reporting gap and increased the frequency of reporting requirements for independent expenditures related to campaigns.

2017

The League supported SB1424, the Small Donor Democracy Matching System for Fair Elections Act, which would create a small donor campaign contribution matching system for candidates for IL State Constitutional Offices and the State Legislature.

SB2089, legislation that closes a loophole in the Election Code by requiring tax-exempt 501(c)(4), 501(c)(5) and 501(c)(6) organizations, defined as political action committees, ballot initiative committees and independent expenditure committees by the Internal Revenue Code, who make contributions to candidates to report their donors was supported by LWVIL.

2020

The League included four campaign finance questions to be put to candidates in its General Assembly Candidate Forums:

1. Do you support instituting campaign finance limits on self-funded candidates?
2. Do you support limits on candidates in self-funded races transferring surplus funds to local, state, or national party committees?
3. Do you support restrictions on the ability of state party committees to contribute money to a candidate’s campaign?
4. Do you support implementing a public campaign finance program so elected officials can be accountable to their everyday constituents

Selection of the President

1970, 1982, 2004, 2010

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. We support the use of the National

Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.

The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system—from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with enough information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL members participated in the position review adopted at the 2002 LWWUS Convention.

Background

National Popular Vote Compact

The Illinois General Assembly passed legislation that created an agreement among the states to elect the president under a National Popular Vote Compact. LWVIL took no action on this legislation.

At the time when Illinois was one of only four states that had adopted the Compact, delegates to the 2008 LWWUS Convention adopted a fast-track study of the advisability of using it as a method for electing the U.S. President. LWVIL members participated in the study. In May 2009 the national board announced the League's position affirming its support of the direct election of the president and abolition of the Electoral College.

In 2010, the National Popular Vote Compact was added to the U.S. position on Selection of the President as "as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished." At the 2022 convention in Denver, LWWUS President Deborah Turner announced that LWWUS was launching a well-funded, nationwide campaign to abolish the electoral college by Constitutional amendment. The ad hoc electoral college committee, hosted by Illinois Leagues, was identified as the working group for the LWWUS campaign to abolish the electoral college by Constitutional amendment.

LWVIL Conventions of 2017, 2019, and 2021; LWWUS Conventions of 2018, 2020, and 2022

Illinois convention delegates overwhelmingly passed "Will of Convention" motions in 2017, 2019, and 2021, requesting the LWVIL delegation to the subsequent LWWUS conventions support motions, brought by Illinois Leagues, to make the long-held LWWUS position to abolish the electoral college into a LWWUS "program item." (e.g., a priority issue)

League members from numerous Illinois Leagues hosted Caucuses, distributed information, and lobbied to support this motion at these three LWWUS conventions. The motion failed to pass at the 2018 LWWUS convention, did get adopted at the 2020 convention, and again in 2022. At that 2022 convention in Denver, LWWUS President Deborah Turner announced that LWWUS was launching a well-funded, nationwide campaign to abolish the electoral college by Constitutional amendment.

Electoral College working group hosted by Illinois Leagues

An ad hoc electoral college committee, comprised of members from many Illinois Leagues, and with guest members from numerous other states, has been identified by LWWUS as the "working group" for the national campaign to abolish the electoral college by Constitutional amendment. Having formed in 2017, this committee is focused on educating the public to gather support and stimulate interest in its abolishment by amendment.

Voter Representation/Electoral Systems

2020

LWVUS Position

LWVUS promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive. We encourage electoral methods that provide the broadest voter representation possible and are expressive of voter choices.

Whether for single or multiple winner contests, the League supports electoral methods that:

- Encourage voter participation and voter engagement
- Encourage those with minority opinions to participate, including under-represented communities
- Are verifiable and auditable
- Promote access to voting
- Maximize effective votes/minimize wasted votes
- Promote sincere voting over strategic voting
- Implement alternatives to plurality voting
- Are compatible with acceptable ballot-casting methods, including vote-by-mail

The LWVUS believes in representative government. The League supports electoral systems that elect policy-making bodies—legislatures, councils, commissions, and boards—that proportionally reflect the people they represent. We support systems that inhibit political manipulation (e.g., gerrymandering).

The LWVUS supports enabling legislation to allow local jurisdictions to explore alternative electoral methods, as well as supporting state election laws allowing for more options at both the state and local levels. With the adoption of any electoral system, the League believes that education of the voting public is important and funding for startup and voter education should be available. We encourage a concerted voter education process.

Background

On June 1, 2021, more than 100 scholars of democracy issued a “Statement of Concern” warning that democracy in the United States is in peril. They pointed to legislatures across the country proposing or implementing “radical changes to core electoral procedures.” The statement added that these changes “are transforming several states into political systems that no longer meet the minimum conditions for free and fair elections.”

Ranked Choice Voting

Best Practices Criteria for Applying Ranked Choice Voting Position to Legislation

The LWVIL Ranked Choice Voting Task Force was formed in 2022. LWVUS and LWVIL positions support ranked choice voting (RCV) as an alternative to plurality voting that can be applied in any election. The LWVIL recognizes that these recommended criteria represent best practice. As many of these criteria as possible should be included:

- Provides for voter education using an RCV ballot.
- All voting equipment must be fully capable for RCV.
- Understandable ballots.
- Proportional RCV is used for multi-winner elections.
- Allows for qualified write-in candidates.

The LWVIL supports local Leagues’ ability to advocate for such a system at the local level. The LWVIL supports the right of local governments to choose RCV for their local elections regardless of what system is used at the state level.

Citizen Rights

Citizen’s Right to Know/Citizen Participation

1984

LWVUS Position

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

LWVIL Action

Since the adoption of Illinois' Open Meetings Act in 1957 and revisions/ amendments to the act in 1995, LWVIL has supported legislation to strengthen the act and opposed proposals to weaken it. Local Leagues have used the act frequently while monitoring their local governments.

1983: LWVIL supported the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Records Act, to allow citizens, civic organization members and the media access to documents, records and reports kept on file by state and local governments.

2004

LWVIL opposed legislation which would have limited the time to sue after receiving notice of denial of appeal of a request for disclosure of documents.

2009

Legislation to strengthen FOIA was passed but in November 2010, HB 5154 (PA 96-1483) became law, limiting the public's right to access performance records of public employees; disclosure of performance evaluations is prohibited under the Personnel Record Review Act.

2014

The League opposed (PA98-1129) legislation that reduced government transparency by limiting the ability of citizens to seek public records under the Freedom of Information Act. It is more difficult for citizens to obtain a large volume of records.

2015

The League opposed legislation that would exempt municipalities from disclosing key financial information about contracts and events held at publicly-owned venues, preventing the public from knowing what some municipalities are doing with tax dollars and the facilities owned and operated with taxpayer money.

Individual Liberties

1982

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes in the individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. The League is convinced that individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.

LWVIL Action

2000

LWVIL supported a series of legislative initiatives designed to codify in Illinois the Federal Violence Against Women Act that would have provided civil remedies for gender based violence. LWVIL supported legislation requiring the Secretary of State to determine the extent of racial profiling in traffic stops.

2003

LWVIL Convention delegates approved a Will of the Convention calling for LWVUS to work for abolition of the USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism). Many local Leagues held public education forums on provisions of the Act.

2004

League members were asked to support the Security and Freedom Ensure (SAFE) Act to address some of the most problematic provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act.

Evaluating Constitutional Amendment Proposals and Constitutional Conventions

Constitutional Amendment Proposals

2016

LWVUS Position

The League will only support a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution if it advances and conforms to an LWVUS position. In addition, the League believes the following should be considered in identifying an appropriate and well-crafted constitutional amendment:

- A. Whether the public policy objective addresses matters of such acute and abiding importance that the fundamental charter of our nation must be changed. Amendments are changes to a document that provides stability to our system and should be undertaken to address extreme problems or long-term needs.
- B. Whether the amendment as written would be effective in achieving its policy objective. Amendments that may be unenforceable, miss the objective, or have unintended consequences may not achieve the policy objective.
- C. Whether the amendment would either make our political system more democratic or protect individual rights. Most adopted amendments have sought to make our system more representative or to protect the rights of minorities.
- D. Whether the public policy objective can be achieved by a legislative or political approach that is less difficult than a constitutional amendment. In order to expend resources wisely, it is important to consider whether legislation or political action is more likely to succeed than an amendment.
- E. Whether the public policy objective is more suited to a constitutional and general approach than to a statutory and detailed approach. It is important to consider whether the goal can best be achieved by an overall value statement, which will be interpreted by the courts, or with specific statutory detail to resolve important issues and reduce ambiguity.

Constitutional Conventions Under Article V of the U.S. Constitution

2016

LWVUS Position

The League is concerned that there are many unresolved questions about the powers and processes of an Article V Constitutional Convention. The League believes such a convention should be called only if the following conditions are in place:

- A. The Constitutional Convention must be transparent and not conducted in secret. The public has a right to know what is being debated and voted on.
- B. Representation at the Constitutional Convention must be based on population rather than one-state, one-vote, and delegates should be elected rather than appointed. The delegates represent citizens, should be elected by them, and must be distributed by U.S. population.
- C. Voting at the Constitutional Convention must be by delegate, not by state. Delegates from one state can have varying views and should be able to express them by individual votes.
- D. The Constitutional Convention must be limited to a specific topic. It is important to guard against a “runaway convention” which considers multiple issues or topics that were not initiated by the states.
- E. Only state resolutions on a single topic count when determining if a Constitutional Convention should be called. Counting state requests by topic ensures that there is sufficient interest in a particular subject to call a Convention and enhances citizen interest and participation in the process.

- F. The validity of state calls for an Article V Constitutional Convention must be determined by the most recent action of the state. If a state has enacted a rescission of its call, that rescission must be respected by Congress.

Public Policy on Reproductive Rights

1983

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL supports measures to protect a woman's access to reproductive health care, including the Freedom of Choice Act, and to assure safe entrance to health care facilities.

LWVIL opposes efforts to require parental consent and notification for procedures.

Note: July 2013 Illinois Supreme Court upheld 1995 law that requires doctors to notify parents of girls 17 and younger who seek an abortion.

1999

League opposed legislative efforts to prohibit so-called "partial-birth" abortions and efforts to restrict the use of Medicaid monies to fund abortions. League was successful in persuading the Governor to veto a bill that would have banned payment for medically necessary abortions for women receiving Medicaid health benefits.

2009–11

In 2010 LWVIL, as part of the Campaign for Reproductive Health and Access (CRH&A), signed a letter to the Governor encouraging the state to focus efforts on funding for evidence based programs with proven effectiveness in preventing teen pregnancy. Subsequently Title V abstinence-only funds were rejected by Illinois in favor of Personal Responsibility Education (PREP) funds included in the Affordable Care Act. LWVIL supported SB1619 introduced in 2011 to implement the PREP in Illinois public schools that offer sex education grades 6-12. The curriculum provides information on both abstinence and prevention. Parents can remove their children from these classes for any reason. Illinois received \$2.33 million from federal PREP to cover training costs.

LWVIL signed on to a CRH&A letter to Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board regarding Certificate of Need in the asset purchase agreement between Vanguard Health Systems and two 2 suburban Chicago hospitals. The objection was to Vanguard's agreeing to maintain religiously-based restrictions on reproductive health services at these hospitals which were non-sectarian before affiliation with Resurrection. Purchase went through with restrictions unchanged.

2011–2013

The Affordable Care Act

Reproductive health was at issue in the 2012 Presidential primaries, general election and in a number of state contests. A proposed HHS regulation that would require insurance companies to provide contraception without co-pay, as recommended by the Institute of Medicine, was opposed by religious organizations (LWVIL sent a letter of support to HHS). Despite exemptions for churches and smaller institutions, but not health systems and universities, the issue remains contentious.

Illinois Reproductive Health Bills

Bills to limit abortion were filed in past three years, part of a national trend. Two bills were introduced in 2012, and 2 similar bills in 2013. HB2683, The Ultrasound Opportunity Act, requires an ultrasound to be performed prior to any abortion irrespective of medical management, and HB 2684 requires a clinic performing more than 50 abortions a year meet stringent Surgical Treatment Center license requirements.

LWVIL sent witness slips to oppose both HB2683 and HB2684. As in previous year these bills did not come up for a vote.

2013–2015

Comprehensive Sex Education, signed into law August 2013 requires public schools that have sex education programs for grades 6-12 to develop a curriculum medically accurate, age appropriate, and complete, teaching abstinence and other methods to prevent pregnancy, and Sexually Transmitted Infections. Parents may have their children opt out of the program. LWVIL supported this bill and similar bills not brought to a vote two previous sessions.

Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby, a challenge to the ACA by employers who contended they cannot be required to provide certain reproductive health coverage for employees if it violates the employers' religious beliefs. The Supreme Court of the U.S. voted 5 to 4 on 6/30/14 to uphold a corporation's right to refuse to provide contraception based on the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act.

LWVUS filed an Amicus Brief in opposition. An excerpt follows.

"The League of Women Voters has a long-standing interest in programs and policies that provide access to health care for all residents of the United States. Since 1992, when League members studied the issue of health care, we have worked for comprehensive health care coverage for all Americans. The League also has a strong commitment to the concept that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices."

2015

LWVIL filed witness slips and TFA in support of a bill that amends the **Illinois Right of Conscience** law requiring that providers give patients information to make decisions on their health care when the provider has religious objections. Providers can document religious objections if protocols are in place to insure the patient is fully informed of the accepted standard of care for their condition and where to obtain care. Many providers with religious objections, though not all, have such protocols in place. SB 1564 passed the Senate, House deadline extended to 9/30/15.

In 2015 LWVIL again filed witness slips opposing two bills requiring ultrasounds to be viewed by the patient before an abortion and stringent standards for licensure of abortion facilities. Similar bills have been filed in state legislatures across the country often using the same template. So far none have come to a vote in Illinois.

2015–17

The League took steps to protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

President Trump and Congressional Republicans vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act as a first order of business in 2017. The ACA required Reproductive Health services including contraception, resulting in a Supreme Court case. A group of religious non-profits challenged employer provision of contraceptives. A divided court returned the case to lower courts for resolution. In May President Trump ended the impasse by issuing an Executive Order exempting religious employers from providing contraception. The appointment of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court eliminated the even numbered court, opening speculation on future rulings on reproductive health.

2017

HB 40

LWVIL worked with the Reproductive Health and Access Coalition to pass. The law removed a trigger in 1975 Illinois abortion law should Roe v Wade be struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court; permits abortion funding for Medicaid and state employees. After the bill passed both houses in May, a motion to reconsider was filed, a procedural maneuver to allow time for further advocacy. Although the Governor had indicated he would veto the bill, he ultimately signed it into law.

SB1564 Healthcare Right of Conscience Act became law July 2016: amends Illinois Health Care Right of Conscience Act to ensure a patient's right to medically accurate and complete information, including a referral even though a provider has religious or moral objections. The next month the U.S. District Court

ruled against enforcement of the law due to start January 1, 2017. More litigation followed, allowing a Rockford clinic temporary relief from the law's provisions. Currently five lawsuits are pending and a complaint filed with the DHHS Office of Civil Rights on behalf of a clinic in Sterling, IL.

LWVIL monitored the following bills restricting abortion. None came to a vote.

HB282 amends 1975 Abortion law; HB283 medically unnecessary ultrasound and waiting period for surgical or medication abortion, data filed without confidentiality; HB4108 reinstates trigger provision were Roe vs. Wade struck down, criminalizing abortion, bans state funding; HB4114, SB2241 defines an unborn child from conception as having US Constitutional rights, no exceptions for rape, incest, women's health, bans DHS grants and referrals for abortion; HB78 eliminates funding for abortions.

2018–19

The Affordable Care Act required Reproductive Health services including contraception, resulting in a Supreme Court case. A group of religious non-profits challenged employer provision of contraceptives. A divided court returned the case to lower courts for resolution but President Trump ended the impasse by issuing an Executive Order exempting religious employers from providing contraception.

Supreme Court. The appointment of Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court eliminated the even numbered court, opening speculation on future reproductive health rulings. In October 2018 Judge Brett Kavanaugh was also confirmed. He brings to the Court a record of opposition to the ACA, abortion and contraception, solidifying the Court's conservative tilt.

In the beginning of 2019, several states passed very restrictive abortion laws. The probable goal of these laws is to bring a case before the Supreme Court to end Roe v Wade. New York has passed a liberal law that treats abortion as health care, with no restrictions until 24 weeks gestation. Illinois also passed a law that treats abortion as healthcare, between a woman and her healthcare provider, with no restrictions.

Title X Family Planning services. Recent final rules include funding for organizations providing only "natural family planning," not the range of effective contraception ACA requires. The rules also block funds to family planning providers, such as Planned Parenthood, which also provide abortion services. 23 States Attorney Generals, the AMA and family planning organizations filed legal challenges.

HB 2495 Illinois Reproductive Health Act, established the fundamental right to reproductive health. Provides that every individual possesses rights with respect to personal decisions about their reproductive health, between them and their healthcare provider, with limited governmental interference. Repeals the IL Abortion Law of 1975, the long-blocked Partial Birth Abortion Act, and takes abortion out of the criminal code. Requires insurance companies to add abortion to current coverage of contraception, infertility treatment and maternity care. LWVIL monitored, but leadership never gave approval to support. The last week of May it was added to **SB25**, as House Amendment 1, passed both Houses on May 31, and was signed by the Governor on June 12.

SB1594 Repeal Parental Notice for Abortion Act Would have repealed the law that requires a healthcare provider to notify an adult family member prior to performing an abortion for a patient under age 18. Signed in Support and advocated for bill, but it remains in Committee.

2020–21

Supreme Court

A number of states have passed restrictive abortion laws. 22 have "trigger" laws; were Roe vs Wade modified or overturned, these would automatically become State law.

In 2020 three judges, appointed to SCOTUS by the Trump administration, could potentially rule with more restrictions on abortion. In 2021 the Court agreed to hear Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization on a restrictive Mississippi abortion law. At issue: whether all pre-viability prohibitions on elective abortions are unconstitutional.

Bills designed to Repeal Parental Notification of Abortion didn't move out of Committee for two sessions, despite strong advocacy by Reproductive Health Access Coalition of which League is a member.

SB818 Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy 2021 LWWIL successfully supported this bill that provides for public and private schools to teach personal health and safety in grades K-5; comprehensive sexual health education grades 6-12 that is age, developmentally and culturally appropriate, as well as medically accurate.

(For information on Public Policy and LWWIL actions on Reproductive Choices, including Affordable Care Act provisions, see LWWUS position on Health under Social Policy Positions.)

Congress and the Presidency

Congress

1972, 1982

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that structures and practices of the U.S. Congress must be characterized by openness, accountability, representativeness, decision-making capability, and effective performance. Responsive legislative processes must meet these criteria:

ACCOUNTABILITY. A Congress responsive to citizens and able to hold its own leaders, committees, and members responsible for their actions and decisions.

REPRESENTATIVENESS. A Congress whose leaders, committees, and members represent the nation as a whole, as well as their own districts and states.

DECISION-MAKING CAPABILITY. A Congress with the knowledge, resources, and power to make decisions that meet national needs and reconcile conflicting interests and priorities.

EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE. A Congress able to function in an efficient manner with a minimum of conflict, wasted time and duplication of effort.

OPEN GOVERNMENT. A Congress whose proceedings in committee as well as on the floor are open to the fullest extent possible.

The Presidency

1976, 1982

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that presidential power should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a dynamic balance between the executive and legislative branches. Accountability and responsibility to the people require that unnecessary secrecy between the President and Congress be eliminated. Therefore, the League supports the following measures:

EXECUTIVE AGREEMENTS. Presidential authority to negotiate international executive agreements should be preserved. Accountability to the public requires that the President report to Congress the text of all such agreements and that Congress review them periodically.

WAR POWERS. The President should be required to seek the advice of the Congress before introducing U.S. armed forces into situations where hostilities are imminent, to report promptly to Congress any action taken, and to obtain within a specified time congressional approval for continued military activity.

EMERGENCY POWERS. Presidential authority to declare a state of national emergency should be subject to periodic congressional review. The President should transmit to Congress yearly notice of all existing national emergencies and significant orders issued under each. Congress should review the emergencies and significant orders issued under each. Congress should review the emergencies every six months and

should have the power to terminate them at any time by concurrent resolution. (All states of emergency now in existence should be terminated after a grace period for adjustment.)

FISCAL POWERS. The President should exercise executive responsibility for sound management of public funds in a manner consistent with the programs and priorities established by Congress. This requires procedures for congressional consideration of the budget as a whole and measures for congressional disapproval of presidential impoundment of funds.

SUCCESSION AND TENURE. The League of Women Voters of the United States supports the succession procedures spelled out in the 25th Amendment. However, the League favors a limit on the amount of time Congress may take to confirm the Vice President. The League also favors retention of a two-term limitation on presidential terms of office.

Privatization

2012

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that when governmental entities consider the transfer of governmental services, assets, and/or functions to the private sector, the community impact and goals of such transfers must be identified and considered. Further, the League believes that transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good must be ensured.

The League believes that some government provided services could be delivered more efficiently by private entities; however, privatization is not appropriate in all circumstances. Privatization is not appropriate when the provision of services by the government is necessary to preserve the common good, to protect national or local security or to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of society. While the League recognizes that the definition of core government services will vary by level of government and community values, services fundamental to the governance of a democratic society should not be privatized in their entirety. These services include the electoral process, justice system, military, public safety, public health, education, transportation, environmental protection, and programs that protect and provide basic human needs.

The decision to privatize a public service should be made after an informed, transparent planning process and thorough analysis of the implications of privatizing service delivery. While specific criteria will vary by service and local conditions, the League believes the following considerations apply to most decisions to transfer public services, assets, and functions to the private sector:

- Ongoing and timely communication with stakeholders and the public;
- Statement of the circumstances as they exist and what is to be gained;
- Definition of the quality, level and cost of service expected;
- Assessment of the private market— whether there are providers to assure competitive pricing and delivery (in some cases there may not be multiple providers if a service is so specialized, i.e., high-tech, airports);
- Cost-benefit analyses evaluating short- and long-term costs of privatization, including the ongoing costs of contract administration and oversight;
- An understanding of the impact on customers, the broader community, environment, and public employees;
- An open, competitive bidding process with clearly defined criteria to be used in selecting a contractor;
- A provision and process to ensure the services or assets will be returned to the government if a contractor fails to perform; and
- A data-driven selection of private entities whose goals, purposes, and means are not incompatible with the public well-being.
- The careful negotiation and drafting of the controlling privatization contract.
- Adequate oversight and periodic performance monitoring of the privatized services by the government entity to ensure that the private entity is complying with all relevant laws and

regulations, contract terms and conditions, and ethical standards, including public disclosure and comment.

The League believes that the enactment of state laws and issuance of regulations to control the process and delivery of privatization within a state's jurisdiction is often appropriate and desirable. Best practices for government regulation of the privatization process should include the following requirements:

- An open process that allows for citizen input and oversight in a timely manner;
- A reasonable feasibility study and project evaluation appropriate to the size and scope of the project;
- The establishment of carefully crafted criteria for selection of the private-entity (beyond the lowest cost bid);
- Additional consideration for local bidders in order to support the local economy;
- The retention of liability and responsibility with the government entity;
- Allowance for and promotion of opportunities for innovation and collaboration; and
- Provision for employment, benefits, and training plans on behalf of employees displaced as a result of privatization.

LWVIL Positions: Representative Government

Constitutional Implementation and Amendments

1977, 1980, 1981, 1988, 1998 and 2003

LWVIL Position

LWVIL supports:

- Implementation of the constitutional mandate to the legislature to provide an orderly transfer process when units of government are dissolved or their structure or boundaries are changed.
- An appointed State Board of Education with authority to name the state superintendent of education.
- Flexible annual sessions of the legislature.
- A revenue article with as little restrictive detail as possible, and which does not contain limitations on tax rates or bonding power and does not prohibit any particular tax.
- A graduated income tax.
- Constitutional initiative for the legislative article.
- Compulsory referendum for constitutional amendments.
- Merit selection of judges, with provision for public financing at Supreme and Appellate Court levels.
- Recall of elected judges.

The League supports indirect statutory and constitutional initiative, a process by which citizens can petition for enactment of a law or the passage of a constitutional amendment by the legislature. If the legislature fails to act within a specified time, the proposed law or amendment is placed on the ballot at the next election. (This is in contrast to direct statutory and constitutional initiatives that bypass the legislature. After petitions have received the required number of signatures and are deemed valid, the question is placed on the ballot.)

In addition, the Illinois League opposes constitutional amendments to provide for optional, compulsory or advisory referenda for statutes initiated by the legislature. The League supports statutory provisions requiring that those who pass and sign petitions be registered voters, and opposes requiring a representative geographical distribution of signers or petitions. (Note: In 1999, the US Supreme Court

invalidated Colorado's requirement that referenda circulators be registered voters. In response to these rulings, the Illinois General Assembly changed the Illinois Election Code in 2001. Illinois law now conforms to the Federal Constitutional voting requirements that circulators be at least 18 years old and a United States citizen. (This change in the Election Code essentially voids the LWWIL position that petition passers and signers be registered voters.)

The League supports merit selection as the ideal method to appoint judges to the courts in Illinois. Since 2003, in light of a longtime League goal of limiting political influence in the selection of judges, the escalating cost of judicial races and slow progress towards the goals of merit selection, the League also has advocated working for public financing of judicial elections at the Supreme Court and Appellate Court levels.

Background

Ratification of the 1970 Constitution was the culmination of almost 30 years of League effort to repair or replace the Constitution of 1870. A Constitutional Study Commission chaired by Representative Marjorie Pebworth, LWWIL President, 1961–1963 deserves much of the credit for passing a resolution by the General Assembly in 1967 to call a Constitutional Convention.

LWWIL Action

1967

Beginning in 1967, LWWIL embarked on an all-out campaign to convince the electorate of the need for a new constitution. The 1969 LWWIL Convention directed a study on constitutional revision. The League took on the challenge and quickly completed in-depth studies leading to:

Positions on the executive, legislative, apportionment, cumulative voting, amending process and suffrage.

Position on local government.

Reaffirmation of the 1949 judicial position, which had been the basis for modernizing the courts in 1963.

These positions, along with existing positions on education, revenue, environment and human rights, enabled the League to testify on each article of the proposed Constitution. League observers or lobbyists covered all sessions of the Constitutional Convention, and most of the committee hearings.

1970

At a statewide meeting in 1970, the League approved the work of the Constitutional Convention. Again a successful all-out campaign was waged for ratification of the proposed constitution. LWWIL also supported two of the four separate submission items: merit selection of judges and single-member districts, neither of which passed.

Early League efforts to implement the 1970 Constitution were directed toward the Local Government Article in order to strengthen county and municipal government, encourage intergovernmental cooperation, and eliminate townships or restrict their powers. The League voted to drop the local government item from the state program in 1977 because of successes in the first two areas and because abolishing township government was unlikely since they were in the federal Revenue Sharing Program (now eliminated). Local Leagues, however, may work for the dissolution of special districts and/or the elimination of specific townships following local study.

1973

The 1973 LWWIL Convention adopted the constitutional item to incorporate the unfinished business of implementing and amending the Constitution.

1979

The 1979 LWWIL Convention adopted a study of the process of public initiative, referendum and recall for Illinois. Positions reached in this study are now a part of this item.

1987

The 1987 LWWIL Convention adopted a study of the need for a Constitutional Convention with direction that it be completed in time for the League to play a role in affecting the outcome of the November 1988 referendum on the issue. Members concluded overwhelmingly that a Constitutional Convention was not

needed at that time, and LWWIL undertook a vigorous campaign to defeat the referendum. LWWIL joined Committee to Preserve the Illinois Constitution and participated extensively at both the state and local levels in urging a No vote on Con-Con. The League's efforts were successful, with voters rejecting the Constitutional Convention call by a 2–1 margin.

2007

The 2007 LWWIL Convention adopted another study of the need for a State Constitutional Convention that would be asked of voters on the November 2008 ballot. Of the 31 local Leagues participating, 27 opposed holding a convention; four were undecided. The LWWIL Board voted to adopt a position opposing the call to convention because:

- There was a high risk of exposing the entire constitution to revision and possible loss of the gains made in the 1970 constitution.
- The cost of the convention.
- Relative ease of the amendment process with the 1970 Constitution.
- Concern about the influence of special interest groups in both delegate selection and the convention discussions.
- Concern about the delegate election process.
- Risk that the current dysfunction in state government would extend to the convention, since the General Assembly would set the parameters for the election of delegates as well as the budget for the convention.
- Public education on the issues was lacking.
- Many of the changes that citizens were requesting were available legislatively.

2008

Once again, LWWIL members campaigned to defeat the Convention referendum for a Convention and, as a member of the Alliance to Protect the Illinois Constitution, participated in a strong, highly visible and wide-spreads media campaign to defeat the proposal. On November 4, 2008, the call to convention was defeated with about 58% of the voters saying no.

Specific Constitutional Provisions

The League's 1969/1979 position on reducing the size of the legislature with single-member districts and eliminating cumulative voting was implemented with the passage of the cutback amendment. This achievement allowed LWWIL to drop the position from the program in 1989.

1999

LWWIL Convention adopted a study of cumulative voting, contingent on available funding. Cumulative voting was a component of the Election Systems Study (1999–2002). In responding to the Election Systems questionnaire submitted to them, League members did not support a return to cumulative voting.

Merit Selection of Judges

The League has been a strong advocate for merit selection of judges, working over the years for a merit selection amendment. The legislature has failed thus far to place the issue on the ballot. In October 2000, the LWWIL Board reaffirmed the merit selection position, choosing not to support public financing as an incremental step toward achieving merit selection.

2001

However, at the 2001 LWWIL Convention, a Will of the Convention Motion directed the LWWIL Board to reexamine the merit selection position to determine “a plan of action for implementation of the position in the current political environment.” Convention delegates wanted to know if the original study allowed for incremental steps to ensure an independent judiciary.

2003

A review of League history and action dealing with merit selection of judges revealed that, between 1967 and 1986, the League had supported a number of different combination “local option” and mandatory merit selection proposals. LWWIL supported the local option proposals as the “only politically realistic way to go.” Based on this review, the Board concluded, and the 2003 LWWIL Convention concurred, that support for public financing of judicial elections is in keeping with the position’s goals, particularly in light of the escalating costs of judicial races and slow progress towards the goals of merit selection.

Local Government

The League continues to support the enactment of legislation to provide a process for the **orderly transfer of power** when units of government are dissolved or their structure or boundaries are changed. Lack of such enabling legislation has been a major obstacle to local decisions to change the structure of government.

Home Rule

The League strongly supports provisions in the 1970 Constitution that allow certain local governments to adopt home rule. The League opposes any attempt to restrict this option. Although the LWWIL position supports the home rule provision in the constitution, a local League must complete a local study if members want to take a position on the question of home rule for their own community.

Recall and Term Limits Amendments

(See State Election Laws)

Other LWWIL action

- Protected the League's position for an appointed State Board of Education with authority to appoint a State Superintendent by opposing attempts to abolish the Board, elect Board members or elect the Superintendent.
- Opposed proposals to restrict the consideration of appropriations and substantive legislation to single sessions of the legislature.
- Opposed efforts to make the Revenue article more restrictive.
- Opposed efforts to abolish judicial retention, by which a sitting judge runs on a nonpartisan ballot on his or her record only.
- Successfully supported an amendment on the November 1998 ballot calling for the appointment of two citizen members to the Courts Commission. A commission with authority to discipline judges was part of the League's position on the Constitution in 1970.
- Played a leadership role in coordinating opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment scheduled to appear on the November 1990 ballot. The Tax Accountability Amendment sought to require a three-fifths vote of the General Assembly to increase taxes. In the belief that the proposal went beyond the limited citizen initiative allowed under the Constitution and was contrary to the principles of responsible fiscal policy, LWWIL formed a coalition which filed an amicus brief in the successful legal challenge to the amendment. The League successfully opposed an effort in the state legislature to approve a similar constitutional amendment for the November 1996 ballot.

2009–2011

The Judicial Performance Commission of Cook County—Pilot Project

As merit selection of judges and money in judicial elections again came to the public's attention, LWWIL teamed up with the Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, in cooperation with the Chicago Council of Lawyers, to participate in a Judicial Performance Commission of Cook County (JPC). Two LWW members served as Commissioners, educating Cook County voters about which judges should not be retained and to identify judicial performance issues which, while not disqualifying, are things the JPC believes can and should be remedied. Since its inception, the Commission has

- Submitted evaluation reports for 22 judges (with performance issues) to the presiding judges where they sat;
- Met with Chief Judge Evans;
- Designed a court watching program.

Court watchers are being identified and trained for program expansion.

(For action on constitutional proposals made under other LWWIL positions, see: Term Limits, School Finance, Fiscal Policy, and laws protecting children under Children's Services.)

County Government Structure

1991

LWVIL Position

- Citizens in each county should have the power to initiate change in the structure of county government. Structure refers to form of government; number of county board members; single member, at-large or multimember districts or a combination thereof; county board chairman elected at-large or by peers; or elected county executive.
- Signature requirements for the petition process for citizen-initiated change in the structure of county government must be reasonable. The number of signatures needed should be a percentage of the actual voters in a recent jurisdiction-wide election rather than a percentage of the registered voters in the jurisdiction. Citizens who have successfully completed the initiative process should be assured of ballot access.
- The Illinois County Executive Act should provide a clear separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. The Act should provide easily understood referendum language for non-home rule counties voting to adopt the county executive form of government.
- County legislative bodies should have the right to require independently elected county officials to adhere to the same personnel and procurement systems as appointed county department heads.

Background

1989

LWVIL Convention delegates adopted a county government structure study. The experiences of four Leagues spurred the study and formed the basis for concurrence.

Although Peoria citizens, by League-initiated referendum, voted three to one in favor of reducing their county board from 27 to 9 members, the board refused to accede to the voters' wishes. Subsequently, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that, under present law, a citizen-initiated referendum on the size of a county board is not binding.

The DuPage County Inter-League Organization (ILO) studied the county executive form of government. After examining the Illinois County Executive Act, the League found many problems. In particular, under the current Act, the county executive serves as the head of both the legislative and executive branches, which does not provide the traditional system of checks and balances. Because of this and other flaws, the DuPage ILO was unable to recommend that their county adopt this form of government.

The Lake County ILO agreed with the DuPage County ILO that the Illinois County Executive Act was flawed but preferred a different form of county leadership for Lake County: a county board president elected-at-large. Because the Peoria decision denies citizens the legal power to institute an at-large chair, the Lake County ILO also recognized the need to empower Illinois citizens with the authority to enact binding referenda on the structure of county government.

The Cook County ILO was successful in working to increase safeguards against patronage and procurement favoritism in county government. The League worked for the enactment of a county requirement that independently elected department heads (e.g., sheriff, clerk, recorder of deeds) must abide by the same personnel and procurement procedures as appointed department heads. Leagues participating in the LWVIL study wanted to be able to support state legislation that would give their counties the right to enact similar requirements.

With a grant from the Illinois State Bar Association the League funded research by a law student on state court decisions on citizen initiative. The study included petition requirements for various citizen referenda in Illinois and a comparison with citizen initiative requirements across the country.

LWVIL Action

No action has ever been taken by LWVIL under this position. Local and County Leagues take action under this position.

Consolidation of Governmental Units and Sharing of Major Governmental Services

2015

LWVIL Position

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports the efficient and effective operation of government. Consolidation of governmental units and the sharing of major governmental services may be a way of promoting the efficient and effective operation of government. In achieving this goal, the League supports a cooperative and transparent process, in which citizens have sufficient and timely information with which to make informed decisions about proposed actions, and well-defined channels for citizen input and review. Administrative and fiscal efficiency should be included in the criteria by which local governments consider whether to consolidate or share major services.

The League supports a system of state-funded grants to local governments to study the feasibility of the consolidation of governmental units or sharing of governmental services.

In determining whether to support a consolidation/ shared services proposal at the local level, as a way of making government more efficient and effective, local Leagues must consider both the adequacy of the process and the likely effects of the proposal's implementation.

In determining whether to support a consolidation/ shared services proposal as a way of making government more efficient and effective, local Leagues should apply the following criteria. While it is not necessary that each standard be met, the League recognizes that these standards represent potential benefits of consolidation, leading to more efficient and effective government:

- Will the proposal result in projected cost savings and a positive effect on taxes over the long term;
- Will the proposal either result in an increased quality and/or efficiency of services or, at a minimum, maintain services at existing levels;
- Will the proposal fairly address disparities in employee contracts;
- Will the proposal result in increased social and economic justice;
- Will the proposal result in a reduction in the number of governmental entities?

As used in this position, consolidation refers to both the process of consolidation and the process of dissolution.

LWVIL Action

2015–17

There has been significant activity on the state and local level to address this issue, however most changes must first occur in state law. The LWVIL position addresses the factors and process of consolidation or elimination of a governmental entity, thereby allowing advocacy and education in this area. Because this is a complex and highly politicized issue area, the Issues Committee approved the formation of an ad hoc committee made up of members from throughout the state.

The mission of this committee was to take positions on the state level and determine the best way for local Leagues to work for the transparent and informed decision making behind consolidation of governmental entities and services, both to reduce the number of taxing bodies in our state and maintain needed government services.

The committee accomplished the following:

1. Surveyed local leagues about past and present actions taken locally to consolidate governmental entities and services which was completed by March, 2017
2. Identified a specialist to join the LWVIL Issues Committee to regularly report on legislative activity and outcomes
3. Provided a workshop at the 2017 LWVIL Convention
4. Sent a representative to attend an informational hearing in Springfield in 2017.

5. Hilary Denk provided testimony to the Committee of the Whole about the LWWIL position and factors to consider when enacting legislation for consolidation.

2018

LWWIL partnered with the statewide organization, Transform Illinois, attending its regular meetings and signing on as an organization to support SB1 which ultimately became a Public Act that expanded the DuPage County pilot initiative to three counties (DuPage, Lake and McHenry). This was followed by another Public Act in 2018 covering all counties in Illinois by allowing county governments to take the lead on specific consolidation efforts.

2018–2019

The League continued to partner with Transform IL, which endorsed legislation that would pave the way for the use of more modern tools to produce digital reports in lieu of outdated methods of submitting PDF reporting.

In addition, the Government Efficiency Assessment Dashboard named the Local Efficiency Assessment Plan (LEAP) was produced for the Office of Lt. Governor. LEAP includes an electronic guidebook and database that guide local officials through a six-step process to decide which, if any, government units to merge etc. or collaborate in different ways to reduce costs and lower property taxes. League members were invited to the demonstration of the database.

State Election Laws

Registration and Elections

1972-1977, revised 1999

LWWIL Position

The League of Women Voters supports uniformity of election laws and procedures throughout the state. Registration and voting methods should ensure the integrity of the election system, maximize voters' unencumbered access to the ballot, preserve the secrecy of the ballot and ensure accurate and timely vote tabulation. Citizens should have the right to file complaints and writs of mandamus to force compliance with election laws.

The League opposes any legislation that would require a declaration of party at the time of registration or at any time prior to a primary election. A voter's selection of a party's ballot in one primary should not be binding beyond that election.

Registration

A combined in-person digital, and mail registration system should be maintained. Citizens with more than one residence should have the option of choosing which residence will be the primary residence for registration. The length of residency required to register to vote should be the minimum needed to allow adequate time for verification and publication of voter lists. Registration procedures should include safeguards against fraud.

Elections

The League supports an efficient, practical and regular election schedule. At each polling place there should be election judges from more than one of the major political parties. The League supports mandatory training and periodic retraining of all election judges. In tabulating votes, any mark or other indication that clearly shows the intent of the voter should be counted. Additional election officials for tallying ballots should be used when conditions necessitate.

LWWIL Action

Computerized Voter Registration List

LWVIL was on record as favoring the creation of a computerized statewide voter registration system since the early 1980's and made that support known to the State Board of Elections (SBE) several times.

1998

The SBE formed a study group to develop conceptual design recommendations for a voter registration computer network and the LWVIL Election Laws Specialist was a member. The group's report was submitted to the SBE in September 1998, but creation of a computerized voter registration system was delayed due to resistance by local election authorities. There was minimal effort to implement the group's recommendations until 2001 when the SBE hired a consulting firm to design a computerized voter registration system. Work on the system was proceeding well until the fall of 2002 when the State faced a budget crisis and FY03 funding for the voter registration project was cut to the FY02 level. LWVIL lobbied unsuccessfully for restoration of the funds. In October 2002, the money ran out and work on the project stopped.

2002

The **Help America Vote Act (HAVA)** passed by Congress in October, included funds to assist states in establishing their voter registration databases. Illinois received some "early money" under this proviso that enabled the SBE to bring the consultants back to complete the Illinois Data Export Application/Uniform Data Form (IDEA/UDF) project. The goal to have the system in place for the March 2004 primary election was not met.

2009

In the spring, the SBE announced that voter registration records from all local election authorities had been added to the Illinois Voter Registration System's database bringing Illinois into compliance with HAVA's requirements.

2017

LWVIL submitted testimony opposing the continued use of CROSSCHECK, a system developed by the Kansas Secretary of State to clean voter rolls between states, due to concerns about security and inaccuracy. The Illinois General Assembly is considering legislation on the same topic during the 2018 session.

National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)

This item was a national priority throughout the 1990's. After NVRA was signed into law in 1993, the action moved to the states. LWVIL and other supporters were unsuccessful in getting the General Assembly to pass the necessary implementing legislation so, when NVRA became effective on January 1, 1995, Illinois was not in compliance.

Immediately, LWVIL and others, including the U.S. Department of Justice, filed suits to force Illinois to comply. In response to the consolidated suits both the federal district court and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the State must comply. The State chose to institute a two-tier voter registration system in which persons registering under NVRA provisions were eligible to vote in federal elections only. Those wishing to vote in local and state elections had to register a second time. The League and its coalition partners continued to work for passage of legislation to implement NVRA and to end the two-tier voter registration system. A bill to make the two-tier voter registration system a part of the Illinois Election Code was defeated in the 1995 veto session.

1995

LWVIL filed a second lawsuit in November challenging the constitutionality of the two-tier voter registration system. The League's position prevailed in both the circuit court and the Illinois Appellate Court. In October 1996, the State dropped its legal challenge. NVRA continues to be implemented under rules and regulations created by the State Board of Elections.

Many of the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) provisions also amended NVRA, thus, when the state amended the state code to incorporate all HAVA, NVRA matters were included. The League remains committed to having all NVRA requirements incorporated into the Illinois Election Code.

As Illinois attempted to meet the federal requirements of NVRA, a number of problems arose. In response to problems in the drivers' license facilities, the Secretary of State convened an advisory committee in 1999. The committee was asked to evaluate the existing implementation of the federal Motor Voter Law (NVRA) in Illinois and to recommend administrative improvements.

The LWVIL Election Laws Specialist served on the advisory committee that issued its report in November 2000. Several of the committee's recommendations were implemented in 2001. The Secretary of State's staff continued to make changes in its administrative procedures based on the committee's recommendations and reports that all have been implemented. Additional procedural changes have been initiated by the SOS's office in response to problems as they arose. Monitoring NVRA implementation remains a League priority.

2015–17

In November 2015 LWVIL joined the Just Democracy coalition, which worked toward passage of automatic voter registration (AVR) in Illinois.

Although the bill passed in the Illinois General Assembly with bipartisan support in 2016, Governor Rauner's veto was successful in defeating AVR.

In 2017, a revised AVR bill was introduced (SB1933) by Illinois Senator Andy Manar. It passed unanimously with bipartisan support in both the Illinois House (115-0) and Illinois Senate (55-0) and was signed into law by Governor Rauner in August 2017. LWVIL diligently worked toward passage through the Just Democracy coalition with a number of TFAs, contacts with legislators and the governor's office plus a number of meetings.

At the November 20, 2017 Illinois State Board of Elections (ISBE) hearing, LWVIL submitted written testimony both electronically and verbally in person on the implementation of AVR in Illinois. Specifically, LWVIL voiced strong support for timely implementation beginning in 2018.

At that hearing, the ISBE chair noted the unanimous bipartisan passage of SB1933 in both the Illinois House and Illinois Senate.

Contested Elections

1993

LWVIL Convention delegates approved the creation of a statewide committee to research the issue of contested elections and to work towards reform legislation regarding automatic recounts of election results. The committee made a progress report at 1994 Interim Council; however, the resignation of the committee chair immediately after Council suspended work on this issue. No replacement chairperson was found and the item was not readopted at the 1995 LWVIL Convention.

Straight Ticket Voting and the Legislative Process Three Readings Rule

1998

LWVIL joined, as an amicus, in a case before the Illinois Court of Appeals supporting the plaintiffs-appellants' contention that the passage of PA 89-700 violated the three-readings rule (prior to passage legislation must be "read" - presented and/or debated by each chamber of the legislature - three separate times). The legislation banned straight-ticket voting in Illinois. The League's brief addressed only the legislative process, not the merits of the legislation. The Appeals Court accepted the brief; the Illinois Supreme Court denied it. Both courts upheld the lower court ruling. Thus, Illinois no longer has straight-ticket voting.

Voting Rights

2014

In 2014 voters approved an amendment to the Illinois constitution that added a new Section 8 to Article III, Suffrage and Elections, Titled Voter Discrimination: "No persons shall be denied the right to register to vote or to cast a ballot in an election based on race, color, ethnicity, status as a member of a language minority, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or income". The League supported its passage.

The League and other voting rights groups supported Illinois Senate Bill 172. It was passed in the closing days of the Fall session and signed by the governor in January 2015. This major election reform bill when fully implemented is expected to modernize Illinois' voter registration system.

2017–2019

Working with Just Democracy coalition, LWWIL has been monitoring implementation of AVR. Toward this end, LWWIL presented in-person testimony in November 2017 before the Illinois State Board of Elections and in May 2018 before the Chicago Board of Elections. As of August 2019, the timetable for full AVR implementation is January 2020.

LWWIL continues to work with Just Democracy coalition on additional voting rights legislative initiatives.

State Board of Elections

1971, revised 1999

LWWIL Position

The League of Women Voters supports a state board of elections. Such agency should ensure that election laws are applied uniformly and properly throughout the state. The state board of elections should supervise and coordinate: voter registration; candidate filing, reporting, and certification; and the nomination and election processes.

Organization

Members of the state board of elections should be appointed to staggered terms by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. No political party should constitute a majority of the board and the board's size should ensure that all parts of the state are represented. A means for resolving tie votes should be utilized. The League is not opposed to compensation beyond expenses, reflecting the scope of the job.

Responsibilities

The state board of elections should interpret and compel compliance with the election laws and should have the power to receive complaints, conduct investigations, issue subpoenas, hold hearings, impose penalties and pursue appropriate enforcement action through the courts. The board should appoint an administrative director to oversee the day-to-day operations of the agency and may delegate authority below the state level, as appropriate. To ensure understanding and compliance with election laws and procedures, the board should 1) provide training for registration and election officials and 2) prepare and disseminate information to educate citizens and candidates.

The board should work for codification of election laws and should continually study and recommend improvements in election laws and procedures. It should make annual reports to the General Assembly, the governor and the public.

Election Systems Criteria

2002

LWWIL Position

The League believes that a good election system must meet the following two criteria:

1. An election system should provide stability and continuity of governance by assuring smooth transitions following elections and should produce a legislature that addresses the problems of society effectively and in a timely manner.
2. An election system should also be resistant to both outright fraud and forms of political manipulation, such as those involving nominating processes and procedures, gerrymandering, or financing of campaigns.

The League believes these additional criteria should also be considered when judging an elections system. A system should:

- Encourage close links between legislators and their constituents so as to promote citizen

- participation in government and help to assure accountability.
- Be easy to use and to administer. Citizens should be able to cast their votes with ease and to understand the election results without difficulty. Complicated voting procedures that discourage voter participation and create confusion over voting results should be avoided. Consideration should be given to the administrative costs of conducting elections.
- Produce a legislature that fairly and accurately reflects the views found among the public, enabling voters to be confident that their voices will be heard.
- Encourage high-quality political campaigns by instituting procedures that promote discussion of issues and discourage mudslinging and dirty tricks.
- Encourage high voter turnout, recognizing that while administrative matters, such as barriers to registration, can affect turnout, the election system itself can also affect it.

Background

Election laws and their reform have been a primary concern of the League of Women Voters since its founding at the time women achieved the vote. Action in this area has resulted in:

- Permanent registration
- A shorter ballot
- Reduced residency requirements
- Creation of the appointed State Board of Elections (SBE),
- Consolidation of elections,
- Extension of voting hours to 7 p.m.,
- Liberalization of the deputy registrar law,
- Legislation permitting detainees awaiting trial to vote absentee,
- Amending the election code to permit poll watching by certain civic groups and,
- National lowering of the voting age.
- Compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) in Illinois through legislative and legal action
- Implementation of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA)
- Creation of computerized voter registration lists.

While barriers to voting such as voter ID laws have been enacted in other states, LWVIL closely monitors such proposals for Illinois and is prepared to take swift action if any such measures gain traction here.

Note: Laws governing campaign finance are found in the Illinois Election Code.

LWVIL Action

1976–77

A study of primary elections did not result in any consensus regarding an open or a closed primary system, the League has opposed legislation that makes participation in the primary election more restrictive, particularly the persistent efforts to require pre-primary party registration.

1983

LWVIL worked with a coalition for legislation to enable school officials, librarians, local union officials, and officers of bona fide statewide civic organizations to designate deputy registrars. Since then, the League has worked to strengthen the deputy registrar program.

The League has supported legislation to make absentee and in-person voting more accessible to disabled citizens and to broaden in-person absentee voting opportunities for all citizens. The League's study of election consolidation found that League members were concerned about having a long time period between the primary and the general election and preferred holding elections annually in the spring and November. League efforts to have a later primary have not been successful. The League continues to work for the expansion of voter registration opportunities and election laws codification.

Election Systems

The 1997 LWVIL delegates adopted a Will of the Convention to review State Election Laws positions, including consideration of proportional representation. The review committee concluded that proportional

representation was too much to study given the burden of the overall position review, and recommended a task force be appointed to consider it. However, there were insufficient volunteers for the task force. Delegates at the 1999 LWVIL Convention adopted the revised state election laws position.

1999

State Convention delegates adopted a study of cumulative voting for the Illinois House contingent upon funding from an appropriate foundation source. The Joyce Foundation provided a grant in the summer of 2000 and the League's state committee began its study of Election Systems in the fall. Due to the grant's requirements, the study was expanded to include an examination of other methods for electing representatives besides cumulative voting.

2001

In a caucus meeting at the 2001 LWVIL Convention, members of the state committee presented information and a progress report to convention delegates. The study was readopted by the convention. As a means for reaching member agreement, League members used a mail-in form to identify and rank criteria important for a good election system. Responses were received from members in 42 local Leagues and two members at-large. In January 2002, the State Board reported the results and issued a position statement. The position is written in broad terms that will allow the League flexibility in evaluating any proposed electoral system. There is no reference to cumulative voting in the position because the response to the Election Systems questionnaire indicated that League members did not support a return to cumulative voting.

Although local Leagues were actively and repeatedly offered a prepared discussion model and pass-through grants to conduct public educational forums on the issue, only one public forum was held and the League was unable to meet the grant's requirement to engage the public in a discussion of election systems. The single forum drew a very limited audience but received good press coverage.

Election Administration Reform

2001 - 2007

At the LWVIL Annual Legislative Briefing in February, League members were given an overview of Illinois' decentralized election administration. During discussion, members agreed that the League should undertake a deeper examination of Illinois' election administration. Following the Convention that year, LWVIL created the Election Administration Reform (EAR) Committee in response to the perceived problems relating to the November 2000 election. The EAR Committee, working under the League's Making Democracy Work Action Focus, was directed to examine the administration of elections in Illinois. For six years (2001–07) the committee undertook a number of activities, including meeting with representatives of the secretary of state, the state board of elections, and the disabled community. The committee surveyed local election officials and conducted three poll watching projects. In an effort to understand the decision-making processes affecting election administration the committee had ongoing contacts with several local election authorities. The committee reported its findings to League members through articles in the Illinois Voter, in memos, and in presentations at state meetings.

Among the issues that the committee looked at were: the use of students as election judges, polling place accessibility, testing and certification of voting equipment, limitations on the issuance of poll watching credentials, recruitment and training of election judges, voting rights for detainees, development of the statewide voter registration database, implementation of the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and the effects of new voting equipment on the electoral process.

The EAR Committee's work led to passage of two League-initiated bills

- 1) Allowing detainees awaiting trial to vote absentee (2005) and
- 2) Permitting civic organizations to poll watch (2007).

The League's revised election laws positions completed and adopted in 1999 enabled the EAR committee to take action when needed. In 2007, the EAR committee was dissolved and its findings were incorporated into the election laws position.

Adoption of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Election Conduct

2002

HAVA adoption provided federal funds to help states implement changes they were forced to adopt. Illinois moved quickly by creating a state planning committee to develop a HAVA state plan. LWVIL's president served on the planning committee. Early in the process steps were taken to replace the punch card voting equipment and to make administrative changes not requiring election code amendments. Amendments to the Illinois Election Code were achieved with the adoption of Omnibus Elections bills in 2005 and 2006. Summary reports of these two bills were prepared and made available to local Leagues. Additional amendments were included in the 2007 Omnibus Elections bill.

The 2006 primary election was the first test of many of the new procedures and of new voting equipment. Many problems were identified and election officials worked to correct them before the November 2006 general election; however, that election revealed many technical problems in several election jurisdictions. They were being addressed through the combined efforts of the State Board of Elections, the affected local election authorities, and the voting equipment vendors. Reports from the April 2007 election showed fewer problems but turnout is typically low for odd-year spring elections.

2009–2011

LWVIL monitored press reports about voting problems, informed League members about legislative changes relating to voter registration, residency requirements, absentee ballot applications, Early Voting regulations and new rules governing voting by military personnel and their families.

Two new provisions that became effective in January 2011 should make voting a bit easier—the Primary date was moved back to March and candidates for governor and lieutenant governor must now run as a team in the primary. LWVIL did not act on either of these bills; our position favors a later primary date and we do not have a position on candidates running as a team.

2011–2013

LWVIL continued to watch legislative activity in the Illinois General Assembly and took action when its positions applied. Much of the legislation pertaining to the Election Code was handled in omnibus Election bills created by the legislators during the session. Often these bills included amendments requested by the State Board of Elections that clarify and/or correct legislation adopted previously. Among the topics that have been addressed recently are changes in the rules for deputy registrars, alterations in the signature requirements on petitions for state senators and representatives, and, extending grace periods for voter registration.

The legislature also authorized the creation of an on-line voter registration system, clarified the rules for processing provisional ballots and passed legislation providing that persons who are 17 years old on the date of the primary election may vote at the primary if they are otherwise qualified and will be 18 years old on the date of the General Election. The State Board of Elections began developing the on-line voter registration system and preparing the local election authorities for its implementation. It is expected that the system will be up and running by July 1, 2014, as required by the statute. The system was ready in June 2014.

A number of bills were introduced that would require voters to present a government-issued photo ID in the polling place. The League was prepared to oppose them. They never got out of committee. The League will continue to follow election laws activities supporting efforts that ease citizens' access to the election process and oppose any actions that erect barriers to voter registration and the voting process.

2013–2015

LWVIL activity in Election Laws was centered primarily in the General Assembly during this Biennium. Some of the highlights were legislation that permits 17-year-olds to vote in the primary in even-numbered years, another relating to electoral boards and a third providing for the dissolution of a township by referendum. Other laws enacted included: one encouraging school districts to close school or hold an Institute Day when a school building is being used as a polling place; and another directed the State Board of Elections to place a statewide advisory question relating to a tax on income greater \$1,000,000 on the November, 2014 ballot. Voters approved this proposal, but no action was taken in response to this vote.

The 2014 session's 194-page Omnibus Elections bill made many temporary changes in the election code. These were tested in the November election. The General Assembly returned to work and passed SB172

which made the temporary changes permanent. Among them were provisions for extending early voting and changing the postmark deadline for email ballots to Election Day. The governor signed the bill in January 2015. The League supported this legislation. The State Board of Elections and the various local election authorities are mandated to implement this legislation, although the current budget impasse is delaying the process.

Term Limits

1992, 1999

LWVIL Position

The League opposes constitutional or statutory term limitations for members of the General Assembly based on the League's support for accountability, representativeness, and effective performance and for a dynamic balance of power between the legislative and the executive branches.

(See LWVUS position Congress and The Presidency.)

LWVIL Action

The LWVUS Board announced in 1991 that the League opposes term limits for members of the U.S. Congress. Delegates to the LWVUS 1992 Convention approved a motion allowing state and local Leagues to take action against term limits for state and local legislative offices based on the national position.

The LWVIL Board approved extending the position to the Illinois General Assembly and 1993 LWVIL Convention delegates concurred.

In the fall of 1994, the League was prepared to oppose a proposed constitutional amendment to limit the terms of state legislators to eight years. The question was not placed on the ballot because the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the petition calling for the referendum was unconstitutional.

Based on the national position, local Leagues may oppose term limits for their county/village board or city council without a local study. However, if a League wants to support term limits for these local officials, a local study and consensus must be conducted. A local position to support term limits cannot be based on issues of representativeness, accountability or effective performance, or on a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches because these criteria are the basis for the national and state positions opposing term limits.

The 2009 Convention delegates recommended an update to the Recall and Term Limits position but the position was not reviewed due to a lack of volunteers.

The General Assembly then placed an amendment to the Illinois Constitution to provide for a special election to recall a Governor on the November 2010 election ballot. A LWVIL committee developed a brochure informing citizens about the provisions and the pros and cons of the amendment to supplement the official material provided by the state. 65% of voters were in favor and it was adopted.

State Redistricting

1993

LWVIL Position

The League supports a redistricting process which is:

- timely and orderly and which includes a formal announced timetable,
- makes information and related data available to all who wish to participate in the process,
- offers ample opportunities for expert testimony and public reaction to the proposed maps,
- encourages compromise among partisan representatives,
- avoids a partisan stalemate, and
- results in maps which offer the voters a choice of candidates for election.

The League supports the following criteria for drawing state legislative districts:

1. Population equity: The average deviation among all districts in each house shall not exceed a range of 1 percent, with no more than a 5 percent variance between the most populated and the least populated districts. Districts shall be based on current census statistics.
2. All districts shall be drawn in compliance with the United States Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent amendments.
3. Compact and contiguous: All districts shall be compact, with the smallest perimeter possible, and contiguous, adjacent to one another with more than a single point of contiguity. Areas connected only at points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.
4. Boundaries:
 - a. The number of counties, towns and cities divided among more than one district shall be as small as possible.
 - b. Districts shall follow existing political boundaries (i.e., county, municipal, ward lines), as far as possible.
 - c. No city block shall be subdivided, since a city block is the smallest parcel for which census data are available.
 - d. Where possible, district lines shall follow permanent and easily recognized features, such as toll ways, expressways, highways, streets, rivers, and clear geographical features, and when practical, shall coincide with census tract boundaries.
5. No district shall be drawn with the intent to favor a political party or incumbent legislator or congressman.
6. Each state senatorial district shall consist of two entire house districts as currently stipulated in the state constitution. Ideally each state senatorial district shall be entirely within a single U.S. Congressional district.

These criteria may be applied to any redistricting process.

(Also see LWVUS Apportionment and Redistricting Positions. LWVUS adopted a new Redistricting Position in 2016 which includes additional guidelines for the redistricting process and updated standards for drawing districts including vesting the responsibility for redistricting in an independent commission. This position should be used along with the LWVIL position in evaluating redistricting proposals.)

Background

Prior to the adoption of the 1970 Illinois Constitution, LWVIL developed a position relating to apportionment that included a preferred method for redistricting legislative districts after each decennial census. Article IV, Section 3 of the 1970 Constitution details procedures to be followed in legislative redistricting. Six redistrictings have taken place using these rules.

In 1981, 1991, and 2001, because there was no agreement on the proposed maps in either the legislature or the Legislative Redistricting Commission, it was necessary to select a tiebreaker member for the Legislative Redistricting Commission. The selected maps reflected the partisanship of the tiebreaker member's vote. Suits were filed each time and the new legislative districts were determined based on court rulings. In 2011 and 2021, the governor and both chambers of the General Assembly were controlled by the same party and the maps were drawn with little regard for input from the public or the minority party.

LWVIL Action

In 1992, LWVIL created a Redistricting Task Force to develop a position for local Leagues' concurrence. Delegates to the 1993 LWVIL Convention adopted the position on State Redistricting. Also in 1992, Illinois' Secretary of State created a Bipartisan Review Commission to consider reforms in Illinois' Procedures for Re-mapping Legislative Districts. With the adoption of its State Redistricting position, the League was prepared to comment on this commission's recommendations.

The Review Commission was reconvened in 1998 and submitted its report to the governor early in 1999. The commission, which included League representation, recommended changes that required a constitutional amendment.

1999

A Senate Joint Resolution, calling for submitting a proposed constitutional amendment to the voters, was introduced in May 1999. The amendment to Articles IV and XIV would have changed the way in which the State redistricts the Illinois House and Senate. If passed by both houses, the proposition would have been voted on in November 2000. If approved by the voters, it would have taken effect beginning with redistricting in 2001. The League was represented on the commission. Since the General Assembly never adopted the resolution, there was no opportunity to vote on the new redistricting process. In response to requests from legislative staff, the League submitted a copy of League's redistricting position to both the House and Senate Redistricting Committees. Redistricting statements were made to legislative committees, which held hearings around the state.

2009

At the 2009 LWVIL Convention, delegates voted to make an accurate census count and redistricting action focus issues for the 2009 – 2011 biennium. True Census Count 2010 and Redistricting Reform actions included:

2010 Census Activities

LWVIL undertook a major role striving to ensure a complete and accurate count of all residents in Illinois during Census 2010. Governor Quinn named LWVIL the chair of the Illinois Complete Count Committee. Several local leagues took an active interest and participated in census activities of their own, including creating local complete count committees.

Census 2010 counted 12,830,632 Illinois residents and while Illinois gained in population, it lost a Congressional seat. Illinois had 25 districts in 1960; after the 2012 elections, Illinois sent 18 members to Congress.

2010 Redistricting Activities**Citizens' Initiative**

In 2009 in anticipation of the redistricting of Illinois General Assembly districts, LWVIL and other organizations formed the Illinois Fair Map Amendment initiative, the goal of which was to amend the Illinois Constitution by collecting enough signatures on petitions to get the initiative placed on the November 2010 election ballot. From January through April 2010, local Leagues held informational meetings about the amendment and circulated petitions. LWVIL led the coalition, met with editorial boards and collected the completed petitions. LWVIL was invited to testify before the Senate Redistricting Committee as well as the House Judiciary about the goals of the amendment. Despite these efforts, the number of signatures was insufficient to get the initiative placed on the ballot; time and money (not enough of each) worked to the petition effort's disadvantage. However, the work LWVIL did during this period galvanized awareness of the need for redistricting reform.

Redistricting

LWVIL launched its census and redistricting project in February 2009 and worked with local Leagues throughout the state organizing presentations and forums to educate League members and communities about the redistricting process in Illinois and the need for change. Other activities included inviting Justin Levitt from the Brennan Center to speak at the February 2010 Issues Briefing; preparing materials and convening a training session held in September to prepare League members to speak on redistricting issues; and offering a workshop on the topic at the 2011 Issues Briefing. Local Leagues also wrote letters to the editor about redistricting, met with their local legislators on the topic and asked questions at candidates' forums and as part of Vote 411.

A group of reform and civil rights organizations came together in 2010 under a coalition umbrella—the Illinois Campaign for Accountable Redistricting (ICAR) to show that Illinois could change the way it redistricts itself using principles developed during the Fair Map initiative. The coalition obtained grants to purchase software to draw maps, employ staff, promote the process and engage input from the public. LWVIL worked in coalition with other organizations to change the redistricting process using these principles.

2011

As part of their promise to introduce transparency to the redistricting process, the Illinois House and Senate Redistricting Committees held hearings from March to May to receive public comment on the redistricting process and eventually comment on the initial legislative map. LWVIL was invited to testify and members from eight Leagues presented LWVIL testimony.

In 2011 Democrats controlled both chambers in the General Assembly as well as the governor's office, and they used their power to draw maps which would allow their party to maintain control of the General Assembly and win more seats for Democrats in the U. S. House of Representatives. The League criticized the maps. The League also filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the maps for the U. S. House and the Illinois General Assembly. The lawsuit was dismissed.

2013–2014

Yes for Independent Maps – Ballot Initiative for 2014

LWVIL supported the efforts of the *Yes for Independent Maps* initiative to place the Illinois Independent Redistricting Amendment on the November 2014 ballot. The proposed amendment to Article IV, Section 3 of the Illinois Constitution would have changed the way the Illinois General Assembly House and Senate districts are drawn after the US Census by providing for an independent commission to draw the maps.

LWVIL Redistricting Campaign Efforts included:

- Approval by the LWVIL Board on September 7, 2013 to support the *Yes for Independent Maps* initiative.
- Updates in the LWVIL E-News between September 2013 and July 2014 including:
 - An explanation of LWVIL support of the amendment
 - Information on obtaining, circulating and returning petitions
 - An explanation of why the amendment did not include a way to redraw Congressional Districts
 - Ideas on locations to pass petitions
 - Progress of the ballot initiative
- Presenting a plenary session at the Annual Issues Briefing in February 2014, titled *Redistricting: What's Been Happening Since 2011?* Speakers included Ryan Blitstein, CHANGE IL Senior Advisor, *Yes for Independent Maps*, Ruth Greenwood, Fellow, Chicago Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law and Mary Schaafsma, ED LWVIL.
- Making a statement at a press event on May 1, 2014 when the petitions were delivered to the State Board of Elections Office in Springfield.
- Sending a TFA asking for volunteers to help validate signatures on the petitions at the *Yes for Independent Maps* campaign office.

In July 2014, the *Yes for Independent Maps* campaign decided not to further pursue its efforts to get the amendment on the November ballot. The *Yes* initiative failed because of a lack of sufficient valid signatures and a ruling in the Circuit court of Cook County that while Legislative Redistricting appears to be a valid subject for a citizen initiative, the proposed amendment was not limited to structural and procedural subjects as required by the Illinois Constitution.

LWVIL participated in a debriefing of the *Yes for Independent Maps* Campaign in September 2014 and contributed to the discussion about positive aspects and lessons learned from the campaign.

LWV Chicago

In 2014, the LWV of Chicago filed a lawsuit, which challenged the City of Chicago ward maps. Chicago drew maps that protected 41 incumbents and thus avoided a referendum on the maps. Chicago also began to use the new maps, prior to aldermen being elected for the new wards in 2015. The lawsuit, claiming that the city's ward re-map violated the "one person, one Vote" principle and therefore denied Chicago residents equal representation in City council, was dismissed by the court.

LWVUS

Delegates to the 2014 LWVUS Convention recognized the importance of national redistricting reform by adopting a comprehensive three-part program combining study and review of key specific structures of American democracy, with one of the three parts being, "A review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress ... for the purpose of developing action steps".

2015–2016

Independent Map Amendment – Ballot Initiative for 2016

LWVIL supported efforts to place the Independent Redistricting Amendment initiated in April 2015 on the November 2016 General Election Ballot. The proposed amendment to Article IV, Section 3 of the Illinois Constitution would have changed the way the Illinois General Assembly (ILGA) House and Senate districts are drawn after the US Census by providing for an independent commission to draw the maps.

LWVIL Redistricting Campaign Efforts included:

- Having the LWVIL President serve as a member of the Board for this ballot initiative.
- Kicking off the ballot initiative campaign for LWVIL at the June 2015 convention by
 - Providing a campaign tool kit
 - Presenting strategy for local League campaign participation
- Participation by local Leagues in
 - Collecting petition signatures
 - Holding public meetings on the redistricting process and the proposed amendment
 - Presenting programs to students in high school civics classes
- Conducting a workshop, *Persuading the Public that the Amendment Will Make a Difference*, at the February 2016 Issues Briefing
- Joining in the filing of an amicus on July 28, 2016 to the Illinois Supreme Court
- Participating in press conferences

The *Independent Maps* campaign was the most recent attempt to get a redistricting amendment on the ballot by citizen initiative. The Independent Maps Board was bipartisan and had a broad range of representation from non-profits and the business community.

On May 6, 2016 the bipartisan *Independent Maps* coalition submitted over 570,000 petition signatures to the Illinois State Board of Elections. The ISBE sampling of signatures, found a 73% validity rate – well in excess of the 290,199 signatures required to place the amendment on the November 8th ballot.

A lawsuit the People’s Map V. The Illinois State Board of Elections was filed and heard by Cook County Circuit Court Judge Diane Larsen. On July 18, 2016 Judge Larsen handed down a ruling that the Independent Map Amendment was unconstitutional.

Independent Maps filed an appeal directly to the Illinois Supreme Court. On July 28th LWVIL as part of a coalition filed an amicus with the Illinois Supreme Court urging it “to allow democracy to prevail and to let the people have their vote” on the amendment. Independent Maps final brief to the Court on August 9th argued the lower court ruling if not reversed “would eviscerate the constitutional right conferred on the people of Illinois by the 1970 constitution to bypass self-interested legislators and directly propose needed reforms.”

The Independent Map Amendment did not appear on the November 8, 2016 Election Ballot. On Thursday, August 25th the Illinois Supreme Court ruled 4 to 3, along party lines, affirming the Cook County Circuit Court decision that the proposed amendment failed to meet constitutional requirements.

The Court decision rested on the fact that the job duties of the Auditor General are not stated in Article IV Section 3, the Legislative Article, of the Illinois Constitution. Therefore the proposal was a violation of provision for Constitutional Initiative that limits amendments to structural and procedural subjects contained in Article IV. The Court only ruled on one of the seven counts objecting to the proposed amendment.

The Independent Maps Board decided not to pursue another citizen initiative. The limited court ruling made it difficult to pursue another attempt.

2017

As a member of the IL Redistricting Collaborative LWVIL worked to develop Redistricting Principles and Strategies to effect change to the redistricting process for the IL General Assembly.

2018–2020

Focus on Constitutional Amendment through Legislative Action

LWVIL as a member of the IL Redistricting Collaborative worked in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 spring legislative sessions to have the Illinois General Assembly pass a Constitutional Amendment pertaining to Redistricting to be placed on a General Election Ballot. The Amendment would provide for drawing of state legislative and congressional districts by an Independent Commission.

In the fall of 2019, the LWVUS initiated the People Powered Fair Maps (PPFM) program focused on creating fair political maps in all 50 states and D.C. LWVIL's work focused on a state constitutional option for an independent redistricting commission.

LWVIL took the following action:

- Signed onto surveys sent to gubernatorial and state legislative candidates in 2018 concerning their support of changes to the redistricting process.
- Between March 2018 and March 2020 there were six TFAs calling on members to contact their State Senators and Representatives asking them to support and cosponsor constitutional amendments to provide for an independent commission to draw legislative and congressional maps.
- At Lobby Day in Springfield, April 28, 2018, LWVIL President, Bonnie Cox, spoke in support of the Fair Maps Amendment at a Press Conference and at a Subject Matter Hearing before the Senate Executive's subcommittee on Special Issues.
- A TFA on April 20, 2018 asked League members to call Senate President Cullerton for a full vote in the Senate on SJRCA26 and to call State Senators uncommitted on the Redistricting Amendment. (In both 2018 and 2019 the Fair Maps Amendment in the Senate had at least 36 of 59 members as cosponsors meeting the required three-fifths of the chamber that an amendment needs in order for it to pass. Nevertheless The bills were not called for a vote.)
- A TFA on October 28 2019 asked League members to contact state legislators to support HB203 which would take a step toward ending prison gerrymandering.
- On December 9, 2019, the LWVIL Redistricting Issue Specialists held a Workshop on Redistricting and the Fair Maps Amendment campaign attended by 40 LWVIL members. Attendees were encouraged to make in person visits to legislators to get their support for the amendment.
- In January, February and early March 2020 League members made visits to their state's legislators in their district offices to ask them to support and to sign on as cosponsors of the Fair Maps Amendment.
- At the February 15, 2020, Issues Briefing members addressed over 600 postcards to Governor Pritzker asking him to support the Fair Maps Amendment and to urge the ILGA to pass it.
- LWVIL signed onto a July 24, 2020, press release calling for Illinois lawmakers to embrace and adopt an advisory redistricting commission and a more transparent remap process in Illinois.

Drawing of State Legislative Maps

In the year after the decennial US Census the ILGA is required to draw state legislative maps by June 30th before the process goes to a bipartisan commission. In 2021 the full census data was not available until August. The ILGA passed a bill defining new state legislative district maps in May which was signed by the Governor on June 4th. The ILGA used American Community Survey Data, ACS, which is not as accurate a Census Data. LWVIL worked to have more openness in hearings and asked the ILGA to wait to use Census Data to draw state legislative maps.

2021

- In February and April 2021 LWVIL held workshops on using the "We Draw the Lines" Community Mapping Drive tool. The tool allows community members to draw maps for local, state or national legislative districts and to advocate for themselves with actionable community maps and data on their representation needs.
- In March and April 2021 LWVIL and local Leagues testified at hearings of both the State Senate and Housing Redistricting Committees. We stated our belief that responsibility for redistricting should be vested in an independent special commission. Once the ILGA drew the initial maps we asked for public release of map proposals, a two-week period between release of map proposals and votes to allow time for public feedback and lawmaker response, and map proposals to include reports showing compliance with the Federal and Illinois Voting Rights Acts.
- LWVIL signed onto a letter by Asian American Advancing Justice and MALDEF/ Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund affirming that it is never appropriate to implement electoral

district lines based primarily on American Community Survey (ACS) data and the decennial census data is the appropriate data to use for redistricting.

- State Legislative Maps were released the end of May. These maps showed outlines of districts but did not include the specific information needed to know where specific district lines were drawn. In testimony on May 25, 2021, LWVIL expressed concerns that ACS 5-year sampling data was used that undercounts Illinoisians by 42,000 people. It asked the ILGA to request that the IL Supreme Court set aside redistricting deadlines and pass legislation to delay the spring 2022 primary so that complete Census Data could be used to draw maps.
- A TFA on May 27, asked members to contact their legislators to Vote “No” on district maps and ask the Governor to veto the maps because they were based on ACS and not complete Census Data. LWVIL slipped in opposition to the legislation defining House and Senate district maps.

Anticipated Action

LWVIL will continue to work to have US Census rather than the ACS data used to draw state legislative district maps. The ILGA passed legislation to move the spring 2022 primary from March to June so there is a possibility to have the maps redrawn or modified based on census data.

LWVIL will continue to support measures to ensure that the redistricting process is more open and transparent and to work for an independent commission to draw future legislative maps.

LWVUS Positions: International Relations

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

United Nations

1977, 2002

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports a strong, effective United Nations and endorses the full and active participation of the United States in the UN system. The League supports UN efforts to:

- Promote international peace and security;
- Advance the social and economic well-being of the world’s people;
- Ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Foster trust and cooperation among nations by encouraging adherence to conventions, treaties, and other international agreements;
- Protect the integrity of the world environment; and
- Achieve the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of civil and political life.

The United Nations should be an important component of U.S. foreign policy. The League supports U.S. policies that strengthen the UN’s capacity to solve global problems and promote prosperity throughout the world. The United States should work actively and constructively within the UN system, exercising diplomatic leadership in advance of decision-making. The United States should not place conditions on its participation in the United Nations, except in the most extreme cases, such as flagrant violations of the Charter.

The League supports UN leadership in a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to promoting world peace and security that includes ongoing efforts to eliminate the underlying causes of conflict. UN peace operations should include such strategies as:

- An increased emphasis on preventive diplomacy and the use of such techniques as an early warning system to identify possible threats to peace and mediation to help resolve disputes;

- Preventive deployment of UN peacekeepers to forestall the outbreak of hostilities;
- Enhanced capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to contain conflict and establish a just and stable peace;
- UN peacekeeping operations that have strong political and financial support from the world community and the consent of the local parties;
- Military intervention, as a last resort, to halt genocide and other crimes against humanity and to prevent the spread of conflict;
- Protection of civilian populations, including protection of displaced persons;
- Long-term commitment, both pre- and post-conflict, to establishing the institutions and conditions needed for real economic and social development; and
- Enhanced capacity at UN headquarters to plan, manage, and support UN peace operations.

The United States should support all aspects of UN peace operations. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have an important role to play in peace operations, including participating in behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts and providing humanitarian aid.

The League strongly supports the central role of the United Nations in addressing the social, economic, and humanitarian needs of all people. The advancement and empowerment of women is fundamental to achieving peace and prosperity and should be a high priority for UN programs. Other areas for emphasis include:

- Eradicating poverty and hunger;
- Improving basic living standards worldwide;
- Promoting the well-being and potential of children, with special attention to the girl child;
- Promoting human and political rights;
- Ensuring access to a basic education for all;
- Ensuring a basic level of health care for all; and
- Protecting the environment and the world's natural resources.

The League supports efforts to strengthen the development and humanitarian work of the United Nations through greater coordination among agencies, more efficient use of resources, additional funding as required, and more partnerships with NGOs and other non-state actors. UN-sponsored world conferences are valuable forums for building international consensus and developing practical plans of action to solve global problems.

The United States should provide strong leadership and financial support to the UN specialized agencies, participate constructively in international conferences, and fulfill all agreed-upon commitments.

The League believes that world peace and progress rest in part on a body of international law developed through conventions, covenants, and treaties and on the judgments of international courts. Disputes between nations should be considered and settled in the International Court of Justice, and its judicial decisions should be honored.

The League supports the creation of a permanent international tribunal, such as the International Criminal Court, to try individuals charged with crimes of genocide, war crimes, and other systematic crimes against humanity.

All court procedures must meet the highest judicial standards, including guarantees of due process protections and the integrity and impartiality of the courts' officials.

The League supports full U.S. participation in the international judicial system and U.S. ratification and observance of international treaties and conventions consistent with LWVUS principles and positions. The League supports the basic principles of the UN Charter. The League supports one-nation, one-vote in the General Assembly, the veto power in the Security Council, and a strong, effective office of the Secretary-General. The League supports measures to make the Security Council a more representative body that better reflects the diverse interests of UN member nations and the world's people. The United States should work to encourage member nations to consider the needs of the world and avoid divisive politicization of issues.

Member nations have the collective responsibility to provide the resources necessary for the UN to carry out its mandates, with each providing financial contributions commensurate with its ability to pay. The United States should meet its financial obligations to the UN on time, in full, and without conditions.

LWVIL Action

2000 - 2002

Illinois local Leagues participated in both the Trade and U.N. position updates. Local Leagues educated their members and the public on international relations issues with seminars and lectures and through Great Decisions discussions.

2003

State and local Leagues urged the U.S. President to work with the United Nations to resolve the situation with Iraq.

UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

LWVIL has consistently urged our Senators to ratify CEDAW. Although the U.S signed the pact in 1980, it remains the only country to have signed but not ratified it. The 186 ratifying countries include all America's major allies, while the seven remaining non-ratifying states include Iran, Sudan, Somalia and three small Pacific Island nations.

2004

LWVIL supported the Illinois General Assembly and the Cook County Board of Commissioners who passed ratification resolutions.

2010

IL Sen. Richard Durbin, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law, held the first CEDAW hearing and pledged to work for ratification.

Trade

1973, 2003

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports a liberal U.S. trade policy aimed at reducing trade barriers and expanding international trade. Such a policy helps foster international cooperation, democratic values, and economic prosperity at home and abroad as well as benefiting consumers through lowered prices, expanded choice, and improved products and services. The League believes that U.S. trade policy should be based on the long-term public interest, not on special interests, and should advance the achievement of other important policy goals, including:

- Improvement of basic living standards worldwide; reduction of inequalities within and among nations;
- Protection of the environment and global natural resources;
- Respect for human, labor, religious, and political rights; and
- Improvement of labor conditions around the world.

The League endorses the worldwide systematic reduction of tariffs, subsidies and quotas. The League also supports the reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade consistent with the goals and strategies set forth in this position statement. Administrative and customs procedures should be efficient and flexible.

The League supports U.S. participation in an international trade organization aimed at promoting worldwide economic growth via an open trading system. This organization should have the power to hold nations accountable for commitments made in multilateral trade treaties and should recognize the legitimacy of international agreements in the areas of the environment, labor, and human rights. Its proceedings should be open to scrutiny by the public, the press, and non-governmental organizations. The public should have

timely access to a wide range of its documents, and its dispute settlement process should allow friend-of-the-court briefs.

The organization should recognize the legitimacy of a country's measures in the areas of the environment, health, labor, and human rights that are more stringent than international standards or than those of its trading partners. These measures should not discriminate between domestic products and imports and should not be used as a pretext for restricting the flow of trade. The League believes that trade agreements should be negotiated multilaterally in the broadest possible international forum. Regional and bilateral trade agreements can be useful steppingstones to broader trade liberalization but should not be allowed to block progress in multilateral negotiations nor to marginalize poor countries.

The League believes that the U.S. trade policy-making process should be open, transparent, and efficient and should advance League trade policy goals. The President should be given the authority to negotiate trade agreements within prior guidelines and conditions set by Congress. Congress should have an adequate but limited time period to debate and accept or reject the resulting proposed agreements, without amendment. Congress should take an active part in the policy-making process, establishing trade priorities and negotiating objectives and observing and monitoring trade negotiations. Congress should have the resources and staff expertise necessary to fulfill its trade responsibilities. The trade policy-making processes of both Congress and the executive branch should include meaningful opportunities for input from a broad range of public interest perspectives, as well as from business interests, and should include timely assessment of the impact of proposed trade agreements.

The League supports a variety of trade-related strategies to protect the environment and promote labor, political, religious, and human rights, including:

- Trade negotiations and trade agreements that lead to progress on environmental and social objectives;
- Monitoring and reporting of countries' practices and performance in these areas;
- Recognition of the legitimacy of multilateral environmental agreements;
- Strengthening the International Labor Organization and promoting ratification of ILO core labor rights;
- Promoting ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and similar international agreements;
- International sanctions aimed at ending egregious violations of human rights;
- Legitimate labeling and certification programs (e.g., eco-labeling);
- Protection of endangered species;
- Elimination of environmentally and economically harmful subsidies and incentives (e.g., for fishing, timber, agriculture);
- Codes of conduct to encourage responsible business practices in these areas (e.g., guarding against abusive child labor);
- Domestic regulations and practices that advance environmental and social goals and that are not a pretext for restricting trade; and
- Aid to developing countries to improve their ability to create and enforce national laws protecting the environment and human and labor rights.
- The League supports trade and related policies that address the special needs of developing countries, with emphasis on economic growth and improving income distribution. The League supports such measures as:
 - Priority elimination of tariffs and quotas on exports of developing countries;
 - Longer adjustment periods and financial and technical assistance for implementation of trade commitments;
 - Special measures to ensure access to essential medicines;
 - Financial and technical assistance to enable developing countries to participate effectively in the world trading system;
 - Financial aid for infrastructure improvements; and
 - Policies that recognize the special circumstances of developing countries in the areas of food security and transition to the world trading system.

The League supports strong U.S. leadership in, and financial support of, international institutions and programs that reduce poverty and address the special needs of developing countries in the areas of the environment and human and labor rights.

The League supports measures to address the adverse impact of international trade on domestic workers, firms, and industries. Training, education, and safety net programs—such as cash assistance, relocation assistance, and health care—should be enhanced and made easily available to dislocated workers, whether or not a trade connection can be made. Portability of health care coverage, pension rights, and other fringe benefits should also be assured. The League supports temporary trade barriers consistent with international trade rules to permit firms seriously injured by surging import competition to adjust to changed conditions.

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries

1986

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that U.S. interests in developing countries should reflect the reality of global interdependence. Paramount among these interests are reducing the risk of military conflict, promoting the sound management of global resources, protecting human rights, stimulating economic growth, and improving the quality of life in developing countries. U.S. policies toward developing countries should not be based on maintaining U.S. preeminence.

LWVUS strongly believes that development assistance, which is designed to meet the long-term social and economic needs of developing countries, is the most effective means of promoting legitimate U.S. interests. Military assistance and the direct military involvement of U.S. forces are not appropriate means to further the League's stated paramount interests in developing countries.

Developing countries should not be the pawns or the playing fields for geopolitical competition. The relationship between the superpowers should not be an important factor in determining U.S. policies toward developing countries. LWVUS supports efforts to reduce international competition in developing countries, including:

- Enhancing the role of the United Nations and other multilateral organizations;
- Supporting regional approaches to conflict resolution;
- Encouraging cooperative efforts to promote the sound management of global resources and improve the quality of life; and
- Promoting measures to reduce tensions and increase communication, including scientific and cultural exchanges and other cooperative programs.

International Development Assistance

1970, 1986

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that long-term requirements for world peace, humanitarian obligations, and long-range national interests demand U.S. policies that help developing countries reach self-sustaining economic growth.

League members understand that the development process encompasses more than economic growth and urge that the focus be on the human concerns of development and on an improved quality of life for the people of developing countries. U.S. development assistance policies should enhance human dignity and fulfill basic human needs. The policies should be coordinated with other development efforts, and they should respect cultural differences. The League favors greater participation by the recipient nations in the planning and execution of development programs. The development effort should be one of a partnership between developed and developing countries. Development programs should be long-range, adequately financed, and effectively coordinated and administered.

League members recognize that population pressures affect all other aspects of the development process. The League supports U.S. efforts to assist other nations in their population planning programs, in accordance with the culture and mores of each country. The League also emphasizes strongly the importance of programs for nutrition, health, employment, and education.

The League advocates that the proportion of U.S. assistance given through multilateral channels should be substantially increased, with concurrent efforts being made to strengthen the multilateral agencies where necessary.

The League deems it essential that the trend of reduced aid be reversed and that U.S. contributions for development assistance be increased.

League members believe that aid alone is not enough to meet the needs of developing countries. Measures other than direct grants and loans must be utilized. The League advocates such measures as reduced tied aid, prevention and relief of debt burdens, and changed patterns of trade. The U.S. government must ensure that its trade, monetary, political, and military policies do not subvert the goals of its development policies. The League also urges active participation in the development process by the private sector.

The League recognizes the gross disparity in trading positions between developed and developing countries. The exports of developing countries must be expanded if they are to broaden their economic base and improve their people's standard of living. Because of their need for greater access to U.S. and other industrialized countries' markets, the League favors generalized, temporary preferential tariff treatment and certain commodity arrangements for developing countries. The principle of reciprocity in trade agreements, which the League supports, should be waived in order to make special trade concessions to developing countries.

Private Investment and Commodity Arrangements

1964, 1970

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that private investment of U.S. capital in developing countries can be an important supplemental means of helping these countries reach self-sustaining economic growth. In order to facilitate the flow of private capital to those developing countries that most need it and that can use it most advantageously, appropriate safeguards are necessary against risks for both the investor and the developing countries. In order to protect outside investors against risks, the League favors continuation of governmental assistance, such as pre-investment surveys, investment guarantees, and investment loans.

The League believes that tax credits on funds invested in developing countries could provide additional encouragement. In order to guard against risks for the developing country, the League believes that investors should be encouraged to engage in joint-venture type investments with local businesses, to seek matching investment funds within the country, to employ and train as high a proportion of local personnel as possible for responsible positions, and to send to these countries carefully chosen and well-briefed U.S. representatives. The League welcomes continued efforts by developing countries to encourage their citizens to invest more in their own countries' development efforts and to create a more favorable climate for public and private investment through appropriate internal reforms.

International commodity arrangements serve as a short-term supplement to long-run efforts to promote self-sustaining growth in developing countries.

Insofar as commodity arrangements can help moderate sharp fluctuations in the price of primary products and help stabilize the export income of developing countries, they can serve a useful, though necessarily short-term, purpose.

Each commodity arrangement should be evaluated on its own merit. Such arrangements should be flexible and open to renegotiation within a reasonable period of time.

Each arrangement needs careful supervision and regular review in order not to inhibit diversification within these countries of land, labor, and capital or to distort international patterns of trade. These arrangements might include such compensatory financing efforts as those initiated under the International Monetary Fund.

If any commodity arrangement is to bear fruit, primary-product countries should be encouraged through technical and financial assistance to diversify both their primary-product and industrial position. If diversification efforts are not to be frustrated, the developed countries, including the United States, need to open their export doors wider, to a broader range of imports—whether raw materials, semi-processed, or finished goods. In order to help the United States meet new competition, greater use might be made of trade adjustment assistance to affected U.S. industries and workers.

The League recognizes that continuation of freer trade policies and reduction of various trade barriers are essential to improve the terms of trade of developing countries.

Arms Control

1983, 2010

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that arms control measures are essential to reduce the risk of war and increase global stability. Toward that end, the U.S. government should give the highest level of importance to arms control efforts that:

- Limit or reduce the quantity of weapons;
- Limit proliferation and prohibit first use of nuclear weapons;
- Prohibit first use and possession of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons;
- Prohibit explosive testing of nuclear weapons; and
- Reduce tensions in order to prevent situations in which weapons might be used.

While these objectives should receive the highest level of attention, the U.S. government also should negotiate measures that inhibit the development and improvement of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons that increase incentives to attack first in a period of crisis.

As a goal of international negotiations, the League supports the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons.

The League of Women Voters recognizes that peace in an interdependent world is a product of cooperation among nations and therefore strongly favors multilateral negotiations. Leadership by the United States in advancing arms control measures through negotiations and periodic review is encouraged.

Given the potential for worldwide proliferation of nuclear technology, efforts involving all countries are essential to limit the spread of nuclear weapons and to protect commonly held nuclear weapons-free regions such as the seabed and outer space. Multilateral efforts are appropriate as well to achieve bans on the possession of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons; and to achieve limitations on the transfer or trade of all weapons.

The League of Women Voters also supports bilateral arms control efforts which may be especially appropriate in negotiations to limit, safeguard, and reduce quantities of weapons. The League believes that unilateral initiatives are not the most appropriate means to achieve arms control.

The League does not support tying progress in arms control to other issues. The League believes that arms control is too important in and of itself and too crucial to all nations to be linked to other foreign and military policy goals.

The League of Women Voters believes that arms control measures should be evaluated in terms of the following factors:

EQUITY. The terms should be mutually beneficial, and each nation's security and interests should be adequately protected, as should the security of all nations. Equity does not necessarily require equality in numbers of weapons but may be achieved through a relative balance in capabilities.

VERIFIABILITY. Each party should be able to ensure that other parties comply with the terms of the agreement, whether using national technical means (such as satellites, seismic sensors, and electronic monitors) or on-site inspection. The League recognizes the role that multilateral and international institutions can play in assisting verification efforts and believes it is extremely important to ensure compliance, acknowledging that absolute certainty is unattainable. Equity and verifiability are critical in efforts to limit and reduce quantities of weapons and to prohibit the possession and spread of nuclear weapons.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING. Each party should be assured of the political or military intentions of other parties. Fostering confidence is vital in efforts to stem the development and proliferation of weapons and prohibit their first use, and to reduce tensions.

WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT. All appropriate parties should participate in and approve the results of the negotiating process. However, the League recognizes that, in specific cases, progress can be achieved even though some key parties do not participate.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. The quality of the earth's environment should be protected from the effects of weapons testing or use. Environmental protection has special significance in negotiations regarding all weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional weapons that have residual effects.

CONTINUITY. Negotiations should build on past agreements and should be directed toward future negotiations whenever feasible. Innovative thinking and new approaches should, however, be encouraged when appropriate.

Further Guidelines

League support of arms control measures includes actions on proposals, negotiations, and agreements. The League supports efforts to achieve quantitative limits or reductions that focus on nuclear warheads, non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction, missiles and other delivery systems, antiballistic missiles, conventional weapons, or troop levels.

The League advocates limits on the spread or proliferation of weapons, nuclear technology, and fissile materials. The League opposes the proliferation of weapons, nuclear technology, and fissile materials to non-state actors or to commonly held areas such as the seabed or outer space. The League supports establishing effective international monitoring, accounting, and control of such transfers.

The League's pursuit of bans on the possession or use of weapons may apply to existing weapons or those not yet developed.

The League seeks to reduce tensions through better means of communication, exchange of information, or prior notification of military tests and maneuvers in order to avoid the risks of miscalculation or accident. Other League-supported measures to reduce tensions and create a climate of trust among nations include scientific and cultural exchanges, conflict resolution training, and strengthening the United Nations and its supporting agencies. Efforts are encouraged to mediate regional issues and arrive at negotiated settlements to minimize arms build-ups and avoid conflicts. The United States should keep lines of communication open.

The League supports efforts to inhibit the development and improvement of weapons through qualitative limits, including limits on testing of weapons. These constraints may be selective or comprehensive in their application.

Efforts to improve the arms control regime of international laws, oversight bodies, and verification modalities are also supported, and U.S. engagement and leadership in this regard is encouraged. The League

supports diligence by the United States in meeting the terms of ratified arms control agreements and in reviewing their effectiveness over time.

Military Policy and Defense Spending

1984, 1986

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the U.S. government should seek to protect its interests at home and abroad through the use of nonmilitary measures, including diplomacy, mediation, and multilateral cooperation. These measures reflect the importance that the League attaches to U.S. efforts to strengthen international organizations, reduce tensions among nations, and minimize the risk of conflict worldwide.

The League believes that military force should be viewed as a tool of last resort. Unquestionably, defense of the homeland is an appropriate military objective. In this context, conventional weapons are clearly preferable to nuclear weapons. Any decision to defend another nation militarily should be in support of clear foreign policy goals and tailored to specific circumstances. Military assistance and the direct military involvement of U.S. forces are not appropriate means to further the League's stated paramount interests in developing countries.

The League believes that nuclear weapons should serve only a limited and specific function—that of deterring nuclear attack on the United States—until such time as these weapons are eliminated through arms-control and disarmament agreements. The goal of U.S. military policy, however, should be to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used.

Nuclear Deterrence

The League believes that the United States should vigorously pursue arms control negotiations in order to ensure that all nations reduce and eventually eliminate their stockpiles of strategic nuclear weapons. The League does not support unilateral elimination of any leg of the strategic nuclear triad of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and long-range bombers. However, the League does not support any modernization of the land leg that would result in weapons systems that are vulnerable or increase incentives to attack first.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

The League believes that the defense of NATO allies should continue to be a shared responsibility. The League supports the United States' commitment to defend NATO allies with conventional forces. The League urges continued efforts to negotiate mutual and balanced reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

The League believes there is no appropriate role for U.S. nuclear weapons in the defense of NATO allies. The League strongly opposes the policy of threatening to introduce nuclear weapons into a conventional conflict in Europe, a policy commonly referred to as "first use." Consistent with these views, the League opposes the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons on European soil.

Other Commitments

The League supports the U.S. commitment to defend Japan with conventional forces. Conventional forces also are appropriate for defending other allies. The League rejects any nuclear role in defending Japan and other allies, in protecting access to vital resources or in responding to military conflicts around the world.

Defense Spending

The League believes that defense spending should be examined in the same way as spending for other national needs. Within any given level of defense funding, the United States should move toward emphasizing readiness over investment. Preference should be given to operations and maintenance expenditures and military pay as opposed to research and development, procurement of new weapons, and construction of military facilities. The League believes that savings in the defense budget can be achieved through increased efficiency and improved accountability.

In summary, the League believes that national security has many dimensions and cannot be limited to military policy alone. It can be defined as ensuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, and promoting the general welfare. Key elements include the country's ability to implement social and environmental programs and to maintain cooperative relationships with other nations. Other important components are effective political leadership and a strong economy. Therefore, in decisions about the federal budget, political leaders should assess the impact of U.S. military spending on the nation's economy and on the government's ability to meet social and environmental needs.

LWVUS Positions: Natural Resources

1958, 1986

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

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

Resource Management

Resource management decisions must be based on a thorough assessment of population growth and of current and future needs. The inherent characteristics and carrying capacities of each area's natural resources must be considered in the planning process. Policy makers must take into account the ramifications of their decisions on the nation as a whole as well as on other nations.

To assure the future availability of essential resources, government policies must promote stewardship of natural resources. Policies that promote resource conservation are a fundamental part of such stewardship. Resources such as water and soil should be protected. Consumption of nonrenewable resources should be minimized. Beneficiaries should pay the costs for water, land, and energy development projects. Reclamation and reuse of natural resources should be encouraged.

The League believes that protection and management of natural resources are responsibilities shared by all levels of government. The federal government should provide leadership, guidance, and financial assistance to encourage regional planning and decision making to enhance local and state capabilities for resource management.

The League supports comprehensive long-range planning and believes that wise decision-making requires:

- Adequate data and a framework within which alternatives may be weighed and intelligent decisions made;
- Consideration of environmental, public-health, social, and economic impacts of proposed plans and actions;
- Protection of private property rights commensurate with overall consideration of public health and environmental protection;
- Coordination of the federal government's responsibilities and activities;
- Resolution of inconsistencies and conflicts in basic policy among governmental agencies at all levels;
- Regional, interregional, and/or international cooperation when appropriate;
- Mechanisms appropriate to each region that will provide coordinated planning and administration among units of government, governmental agencies, and the private sector;
- Procedures for resolving disputes;
- Procedures for mitigation of adverse impacts;
- Special responsibility by each level of government for those lands and resources entrusted to them;

- Special consideration for the protection of areas of critical environmental concern, natural hazards, historical importance, and aesthetic value; and
- Special attention to maintaining and improving the environmental quality of urban communities.

LWVIL Action

Child Safe Chemicals

2005

LWVIL welcomed the creation of a new House Committee – the Environmental Health Committee – during the legislative session. The League worked successfully with other groups to pass legislation considered by this committee that would ban a class of toxic chemicals commonly used as flame retardants in consumer products in favor of safer alternatives. These chemicals, commonly known as PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers), are rapidly accumulating in our bodies, homes, and in the fish and sediment of Lake Michigan.

With increasing evidence of the health effects resulting from the exposure to toxic chemicals in our environment and consumer products, LWVIL monitored legislation eliminating some of the most dangerous chemicals found in certain consumer products.

2008–2009

Since children are the most vulnerable to these chemicals, Child-Safe Chemical Acts were introduced during the 2008 and 2009 legislation sessions. Although this legislation failed to receive support, the Chicago City Council voted to ban the use of one of these toxic chemicals, bisphenol A(BPA), in baby bottles and sippy cups, effective January 31, 2010.

A TFA was issued supporting the phasing out of the toxic flame retardant decaBDE. Legislation phasing out the use of this toxic chemical commonly found in TV's, mattresses, and other consumer products also failed to receive support.

Fracking

2013

The 2013 LWVIL Convention took place as two separate bills related to hydraulic fracturing were pending in the state legislature. Hydraulic fracturing, commonly referred to as “fracking” is a process by which high pressure water, sand and unidentified chemicals are pumped underground to fracture geologic formations in order to release fossil fuels. The process poses a threat to water and other natural resources and increases the incidence of earthquakes.

Convention delegates voted to continue work for a moratorium and, if the bill regulating the process becomes law, delegates agreed that LWVIL work for the most effective rules to protect Illinois residents, environment, tourism, sufficient funding and staffing to enforce those rules, and provisions for public input and local control by those most affected by the introduction of hydraulic fracturing in Illinois.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control

LWVUS Position

The League supports the preservation of the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment. The League's approach to environmental protection and pollution control is one of problem solving. The interrelationships of air, water, and land resources should be recognized in designing environmental safeguards. The League's environmental protection and anti-pollution goals aim to prevent ecological degradation and to reduce and control pollutants before they go down the sewer, up the chimney, or into the landfill.

The League believes that although environmental protection and pollution control are responsibilities shared by all levels of government, it is essential that the federal government provide leadership and technical and financial assistance.

The federal government should have the major role in setting standards for environmental protection and pollution control. Other levels of government should have the right to set more stringent standards. Enforcement should be carried out at the lower levels of government, but the federal government should enforce standards if other levels of government do not meet this responsibility. Standards must be enforced in a timely, consistent and equitable manner for all violators in all parts of society, including governmental units, industry, business, and individuals.

Environmental protection and pollution control, including waste management, should be considered a cost of providing a product or service. Consumers, taxpayers and ratepayers must expect to pay some of the costs. The League supports policies that accelerate pollution control, including federal financial assistance for state and local programs.

The League supports:

- Regulation of pollution sources by control and penalties;
- Inspection and monitoring;
- Full disclosure of pollution data;
- Incentives to accelerate pollution control; and
- Vigorous enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions for states and localities that do not comply with federal standards and substantial fines for noncompliance.

LWVIL Action

2020

- League speakers testified during the rule-making for stronger rules on handling coal ash pollution and its impacts on communities and water.
- League issued a TFA about Coal Ash Rule Making
- With Food and Water Watch, the League signed letters to urge City of Chicago to block the relocation of General Iron (a metal recycling plant) from the gentrifying Lincoln Park neighborhood to an environmentally polluted neighborhood on Chicago's southeast side. This is an environmental justice issue.
- The League signed on to a letter from the NRDC to the Illinois EPA, asking them to enforce environmental protections and do so transparently and with a focus on environmental justice communities.

2021

The League joined the Coalition for Plastic Reduction, which consists of 26 civic and cultural institutions in Illinois. The overall goal is to drive producer responsibility (EPR - Extended Producer Responsibility) either locally or nationally with the Break-free from Plastic Act. This act will require plastic manufacturers to be responsible for the reuse or disposal of plastics rather than consumers and/or municipalities.

Air Quality

LWVUS Position

The League supports:

- Measures to reduce vehicular pollution, including inspection and maintenance of emission controls, changes in engine design and fuel types and development of more energy-efficient transportation systems;
- Regulation and reduction of pollution from stationary sources;
- Regulation and reduction of ambient toxic-air pollutants; and

- Measures to reduce transboundary air pollutants, such as ozone and those that cause acid deposition.

LWVIL Action

1990s

Monitored state implementation of the 1990 Clean Air Act and supported efforts to control acid rain damage in a manner that preserved environmentally sound use of Illinois coal.

2000

Began monitoring state clean air legislation as the seriousness of global warming became more evident.

2001

Lobbied for legislation to strengthen Illinois' resolve to curb fossil fuel emissions from electric generating plants, the single largest industrial air pollution source in the Midwest.

2002

Resisted efforts to weaken or delay implementation of the Clean Air Act New Source Review Program that protects Americans by requiring pollution reductions for aging coal-burning power plants and other sources.

2003

Supported state legislation to establish state clean air rules to replace the federal rollbacks on the New Source Review provisions of the Clean Air Act.

2005

Expressed appreciation to Sen. Obama for opposing the Administration's "Clear Skies" legislative initiative, to weaken or delay Clean Air Act implementation.

2006

Local Leagues conducted forums and League members contacted legislators supporting the successful passage of the Mercury Rule that sets strict mercury emission limits for coal-fired power plants. The Illinois EPA drafted a rule requiring nearly every coal-fired power plant in Illinois to install and operate available emissions cleaning technologies by 2009 and to capture no less than 90 percent of mercury pollution by 2015. This rule was adopted by the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) and approved by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules of the Illinois General Assembly.

2007

League members lobbied in support of the Smoke Free Illinois Act, signed into law, prohibiting smoking in public places and places of employment.

Climate Change Background

2006

Recognizing the need to address climate change, Gov. Blagojevich issued an Executive Order on **Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction** and created the Illinois Climate Change Advisory Group to consider the various policies and strategies to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions in Illinois.

2007

- LWVIL participated in the Climate Change Advisory Group in Springfield and Chicago.
- Local Leagues began helping their communities lessen their impact on global climate change by joining the Sierra Club's "Cool Cities" program, whereby local governments endorsed the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and took steps to reduce their carbon emissions below 1990 levels.
- LWVIL supported legislation allowing the Illinois EPA to provide technical assistance to communities that endorsed the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

2009–2015

- LWVIL actively supported (with LWVUS permission) the Waxman-Markey cap and trade system to reduce industrial pollution emissions

- Supported a strong Clean Air Act and the EPA's authority to enforce it, including meetings with staff of Senators Durbin and Kirk
- **Clean Car Act:** LWVIL, as part of the Illinois Climate Action Network, lobbied for state legislation requiring automakers to meet the same high emissions standards for new cars and light trucks already set in 14 other states. The legislation failed to pass in Illinois but the California standards were mandated at the federal level beginning with the 2012 model year.
- League testified (with LWVUS permission) at US EPA hearings in Chicago, in support for new federal EPA regulations to limit mercury and other air toxics emissions from coal-fired and oil-fired power plants and encouraged immediate implementation of the new standards.
- In accordance with the LWVUS position, Climate Change was adopted as an action focus for the 2011–2013 and 2013–2015 biennia by LWVIL Convention delegates.
- LWVIL signed a coalition letter to Senators Durbin and Kirk expressing our support of the EPA's Clean Air Act.
- LWVIL joined other environmental groups in opposing the Tenaska coal-to-gas plant in Taylorville, IL; The "clean coal" project was scrapped in 2013 although the companies involved are expected to try to renew the effort in the coming years.
- LWVIL, with LWVUS permission, testified at US EPA hearing in support of Proposed Tier 3 Tailpipe and Evaporative Emissions and Vehicle Fuel Standards.
- LWVIL presented testimony at an EPA hearing supporting limits on mercury emissions from power plants.

2015–2017

- Testified before the EPA in support for new federal regulations limiting mercury and air toxics from coal and oil burning power plants
- Opposed the Tenaska coal-to-gas "clean coal" power plant proposal
- Testified before the EPA in support of strong tailpipe and Evaporative Emissions and Vehicle Fuel standards
- Testified before the EPA in support of limits on mercury emissions from power plants

2017–2019

One of the first things the new president did after taking office in early 2017 was to direct all federal agencies to reduce/remove as many regulations as possible, claiming they are "burdensome" to business. Climate change deniers and people with strong ties to the fossil fuel industries now head agencies that are charged with protecting the health and well-being of the nation as a whole. The EPA and other science agencies have been specifically targeted with budget cuts, reductions in staff and limited authorization to act while, at the same time, the administration works to ensure that fossil fuels remain dominant and the EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gasses is undermined. In response, state and local Leagues across the country work to ensure the highest level of environmental protection standards are enacted.

2020–2021

The Biden/Harris Administration entered office with tackling the climate emergency as one of 6 priorities. Biden rejoined the Paris climate accord with an executive order on day 1 of his presidency. He rolled back some Trump-era policies detrimental to the environment and created new roles in his administration that focus on climate policy. Biden has proposed that the US transition to 100% clean energy and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The administration has followed up with the "America the Beautiful" campaign with the goal to preserve/protect 30% of land and water by 2030.

Another executive order stopped the Keystone XL Pipeline and halted oil-drilling preparation in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A court case from the Trump administration to replace the Obama administration Clean Power Plan with a new plan that supported coal-fired power plants was rejected by a federal appeals court. For the first time in recorded history, the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide has been measured at more than 420 parts per million.

President Joe Biden's infrastructure plan includes \$16 billion to plug old oil and gas wells and clean up abandoned mines. These "orphaned" oil and gas wells and abandoned coal and hardrock mines create serious hazards and ongoing environmental damage. Water exiting from mines are contaminated with arsenic, lead and many other chemicals which can leak into streams, rivers and underground water sources.

The infrastructure plan calls for hundreds of billions of dollars for electric cars and trucks, efficient buildings, clean energy and job training. Transit lines will be extended and bike and walking paths will be developed.

In July 2021, the LWV of Lake County (with LWVUS approval) offered comments on the Risk Management Program Rule directing the EPA to increase standards and enforcement regarding ethylene oxide which is emitted at a number of facilities in Waukegan and Gurnee.

Energy

LWVUS Position

The League supports:

- Energy goals and policies that acknowledge the United States as a responsible member of the world community;
- Reduction of energy growth rates;
- Use of a variety of energy sources, with emphasis on conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies;
- The environmentally sound use of energy resources, with consideration of the entire cycle of energy production;
- Predominant reliance on renewable resources;
- Policies that limit reliance on nuclear fission;
- Action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources and energy conservation through funding for research and development, financial incentives, rate-setting policies, and mandatory standards;
- Mandatory energy-conservation measures, including thermal standards for building efficiency, new appliance standards and standards for new automobiles with no relaxation of auto-emission control requirements;
- Policies to reduce energy demand and minimize the need for new generating capacity through techniques such as marginal cost or peak-load pricing or demand-management programs;
- Maintaining deregulation of oil and natural gas prices; and
- Assistance for low-income individuals when energy policies bear unduly on the poor.

LWVIL Action

The Illinois League has

- Participated in a utilities reform task force in preparation for renewal of the State's Public Utility Act
- Lobbied for energy conservation measures
- Lobbied for or aid to low-income energy consumers
- Participated annually in the Illinois Energy Conference

2010

LWVIL participated in the Shriver Institute's symposium on Climate Change and Low Income Communities focusing on home retrofitting for energy efficiency, consumer cost saving, and green business/job opportunities for the area.

Illinois Smart Grid

2009

The Smart Grid is a complete modernization of the electric system to improve efficiency, reduce outages, integrate alternative energy supplies such as wind energy, and help consumers manage their energy usage and costs. A key component of the Smart Grid is the Smart Meter that will allow consumers to respond immediately to price fluctuations and meet the utilities' emissions reduction goals through energy efficiency. League participated in the ISGI Collaborative for Smart Grid implementation mandated by state legislation and the Illinois Commerce Commission. The Collaborative considered a wide range of issues that would shape Smart Grid deployment in Illinois including consumer and environmental concerns, cost

2011

The League did not support so-called “Smart Grid” legislation because it would allow the major utilities to bypass the IL Commerce Commission hearing process for rate increases, thus placing the burden of Smart Grid costs directly on consumers. Legislation passed in the General Assembly but was then vetoed by the governor. During the Fall Veto Session, the Legislature added a trailer bill addressing the concerns of citizen, governmental and business groups and overrode the veto.

Clean Power Plan 2015

After years of supporting a Renewable Portfolio Standards Fix (RPS Fix), in 2015 LWVIL has shifted focus to several sets of bills introduced in the General Assembly to satisfy the state’s requirements for the EPA’s Clean Power Plan. The RPS Fix is absorbed by these bills. The House and Senate bills supported by most of the state’s environmental groups are called the Clean Jobs Bill.

Illinois Clean Jobs Bill - Future Energy Jobs Bill

After years of supporting a Renewable Portfolio Standards “Fix” (RPS Fix), LWVIL shifted focus in 2015 to several sets of bills, known collectively as the IL Clean Jobs Bill, that would satisfy the state’s requirements for the EPA’s Clean Power Plan, including an RPS fix.

2016

LWVIL joined the Clean Jobs Coalition to advocate for those measures that would support expanded renewable energy in the state.

Competing legislative proposals—supported by the large electric utilities on the one hand and by environmentalists on the other—finally merged into a comprehensive Future Energy Jobs Bill. This massive piece of legislation included subsidies to keep nuclear and coal plants online, but also fixed the RPS, introduced a demand charge, and increased energy efficiency investments in the state. LWVIL supported specific components but not the entire bill in part because amendments were being introduced right up to the final votes.

2018–2019

2018 was a quiet year for Air Quality & Energy legislation in Springfield but things heated up quickly when a new governor with a pro-environmental agenda came into office. The key piece of legislation, the Clean Energy Jobs (CEJA) bill, was developed carefully as the next step in moving Illinois toward a clean energy economy. Continuing our participation in the Clean Energy Jobs Coalition, local Leagues participated in Listen, Lead, Share sessions to ensure that a wide range of opinions and concerns were addressed in the new legislation. However, many vital pieces of legislation needed to be passed under the new administration and CEJA was placed on hold during the spring legislative session. As of this writing, it is expected to be brought up in the fall 2019 Veto Session or early in the 2020 spring session.

Two other important bills LWVIL monitored closely during the 2019 regular session include:

- Kyoto Protocol of 1998 Repeal - passed both houses easily and signed by Governor Pritzker on August 15, 2019 - removed limits on state action to curb greenhouse gas emissions (necessary for CEJA implementation).
- Amendment to the Criminal Code expanding the definition of “critical infrastructure” and severely raising penalties for damaging such properties or “interfering” with them - This bill was a product of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and targets environmental protesters. It passed in several states but was tabled in Illinois at the end of May. We expect to see it reintroduced in an upcoming session and will oppose it if it gains traction.

2020–2021

Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA)

Note: This was a difficult year for legislative progress due to COVID-19 and shutdowns.

The League worked with Illinois Clean Jobs coalition partners to move CEJA through the legislature. On August 21, 2020, Governor Pritzker released “Putting Consumers & Climate First” which stated his eight principles for a clean and renewable Illinois. The Clean Jobs coalition worked with the administration to find common ground. Other bills were offered by the legislative Black Caucus (Path to 100) which focused on the state’s solar industry and Climate Jobs Illinois pushed by labor unions. No bill was signed by the end of

the legislative session and Clean Jobs coalition and Climate Jobs negotiators were encouraged to work out differences and come to a unified bill. As of August 2021, there is no consensus and Exelon is planning to shut 2 nuclear plants by 2021 year's end (Byron and Dresden), causing job losses and lost tax revenues in those communities.

A report from Harvard University researchers states that pollution from natural gas is now responsible for more deaths and greater health costs than coal in Illinois. Additionally, industrial boilers that burn plant material known as biomass emit high levels of soot contribute to increased deaths and healthcare costs. This is a concern with Governor Pritzker's bill, Consumer and Climate First Act, which allows gas-fired power plants to continue operating until 2045.

- League issues specialists spoke through Zoom at local league chapter meetings on Environmental/climate and energy issues regarding federal and state actions.
- October 24, 2020, LWVIL issues specialists offered a Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) education update on Zoom.
- LWVIL issued TFA's supporting passage of Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA).
- LWVIL issued a TFA asking members to encourage legislators to sponsor and vote for Clean Jobs Workforce Hubs Act (HB3624, Jan.2020)
- 2020 - LWVIL joined the Downstate Caucus as a coalition partner with environmental groups in the downstate IL area.

Land Use

LWVUS Position

The League supports:

- Management of land as a finite resource not as a commodity, since land ownership, whether public or private, carries responsibility for stewardship;
- Land-use planning that reflects conservation and wise management of resources;
- Identification and regulation of areas of critical concern:
 - fragile or historical lands, where development could result in irreversible damage (such as shore-lands of rivers, lakes, streams, estuaries, and bays; rare or valuable ecosystems and geological formations; significant wildlife habitats; unique scenic or historic areas; wetlands; deserts);
 - renewable resource lands, where development could result in the loss of productivity (such as watersheds, aquifers and aquifer-recharge areas, significant agricultural and grazing lands, forest lands);
 - natural hazard lands, where development could endanger life and property (such as floodplains, areas with high seismic or volcanic activity, areas of unstable geologic, ice or snow formations);
- Reclamation of lands damaged by surface mining, waste disposal, overgrazing, timber harvesting, farming, and other activities;
- Acquisition of land for public use;
- Identification and regulation of areas impacted by public or private investment where siting results in secondary environmental and socioeconomic impacts;
- Review of environmental, social and economic impacts of major public and private developments;
- Review of federally funded projects by all government levels;
- Conformance of federal land resource activities with approved state programs, particularly where state standards are more stringent than federal standards.

Water Resources

LWVUS Position

The League supports:

- Water resource programs and policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality, water quantity, ground-water, and surface water and that address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies;

- Measures to reduce water pollution from direct point-source discharges and from indirect nonpoint sources;
- Policies to achieve water quality essential for maintaining species populations and diversity, including measures to protect lakes, estuaries, wetlands, and in-stream flows; and
- Stringent controls to protect the quality of current and potential drinking-water supplies, including protection of watersheds for surface supplies and of recharge areas for groundwater.

Proposed Interbasin Water Transfers

Interstate and inter-basin transfers are not new or unusual. Water transfers have served municipal supplies, industry, energy development, and agriculture.

Construction costs of large-scale water transfers are high, and economic losses in the basin of origin also may be high. Environmental costs of water transfers may include quantitative and qualitative changes in wetlands and related fisheries and wildlife, diminished aquifer recharge, and reduced stream flows. Lowered water tables also may affect groundwater quality and cause land subsidence.

As we look to the future, water transfer decisions will need to incorporate the high costs of moving water, the limited availability of unallocated water, and our still-limited knowledge of impacts on the affected ecosystems.

To develop member understanding and agreement on proposals for large-scale water transfer projects, state and local Leagues need to work together. The following guidelines are designed to help Leagues jointly evaluate new proposals for large-scale water transfers.

The process for evaluating the suitability of new proposed interbasin water transfers should include:

- Ample and effective opportunities for informed public participation in the formulation and analysis of proposed projects;
- Evaluation of economic, social and environmental impacts in the basin of origin; the receiving area; and any area through which the diversion must pass, so that decision makers and the public have adequate information on which to base a decision;
- Examination of all short- and long-term economic costs including, but not limited to, construction, delivery, operation, maintenance, and market interest rate;
- Examination of alternative supply options, such as water conservation, water pricing, and reclamation;
- Participation and review by all affected governments;
- Procedures for resolution of inter-governmental conflicts;
- Accord with international treaties; and
- Provisions to ensure that responsibility for funding is borne primarily by the user with no federal subsidy, loan guarantees, or use of the borrowing authority of the federal government, unless the proposal is determined by all affected levels of the League to be in the national interest.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL supported efforts to develop a state comprehensive groundwater protection plan based on a policy of non-degradation and continues to work for stronger legislation to protect groundwater quality. Local Leagues have sponsored educational forums and successfully waged groundwater protection and water quality campaigns.

1997

LWVIL received the “Making Waves Award” recognizing the efforts of local Leagues on behalf of the environment, especially in promoting conservation and protection of clean water throughout the state

Since 2001, when “isolated wetlands” within states lost federal protection, LWVIL has supported legislation protecting Illinois’ wetlands. Opposition to wetland protection tends to be strong and based on the argument that economic development must have priority over all other issues. Over the past decade, LWVIL has participated in the Illinois Wetlands Advisory Committee, the Clean Water Dialogue Group, the Citizens Advisory Group on Waukegan Harbor, the Chicago Shoreline Protection Commission, and Healing Our Waters coalition (HOW).

2005

League helped defeat a bill that would have weakened protections for existing wetlands up to 0.5 acre without any mitigation for the loss.

2010

Successfully urged Governor Quinn to veto the STAR bond bill requiring development of a floodplain as part of a downstate development program.

Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes

Recognizing the threats to the health of the Great Lakes, Illinois League members are active participants in the League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region (LWVLMR). In 2013, the LWVIL Convention adopted the Great Lakes Ecosystem position. For information about LWVIL Action pertaining to the Great Lakes, see LWVIL Water position..

2006

LWVIL worked to successfully halt the U.S. Coast Guard's plans to conduct live gunfire exercises using lead ammunition on Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes.

2012

LWVIL signed on to a letter requesting full funding of federal habitat restoration programs despite budgetary sequestration.

LWVIL submitted comments to the Illinois EPA asking for stronger measures in the NPDES water discharge permit for Midwest Generation's Waukegan Generation Plant in August, 2013. Concerns surrounded open storage of coal ash and discharge of heated water, among other issues.

2014–2015

LWVIL collaborated with the LWV Lake Michigan Region to produce a public education project about flooding, nonpoint source pollution caused by stormwater runoff and green infrastructure solutions. Between February, 2014, and October, 2015, 28 programs were presented in Illinois communities, most arranged by local Leagues.

Asphalt Sealants made with coal tar pitch, a byproduct of refining coal, contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). PAHs are known human carcinogens that are also toxic to aquatic life. Dust from the sealants created by abrasion of surfaces by tires and snow- plows is washed into streams, rivers, and lakes by stormwater. Tests in DuPage County indicate that, as in other urbanized areas, more than half of the PAHs in the waterways come from coal tar sealants. In 2014, first LWVIL signed on to three letters supporting bans on coal tar sealant use and sales, and continued annual support for state legislation which would ban their use through 2019.

The reach of the Clean Water Act (CWA) had been made vague by Supreme Court decisions, requiring the US EPA and the US Army Corps of Engineers to propose a definition of the "Waters of the United States" covered by the CWA. In 2014, LWVIL submitted comments supporting the draft rule and also signed on to a letter of support originated by the Healing Our Waters Coalition. Additionally, LWVIL worked with the LWV Cook County and signed on to two letters urging the Cook County Board of Commissioners to support the rule. The rule went into effect in August, 2015, but lawsuits filed by states led to a stay of its implementation in October, 2015.

The work of the Upper Mississippi River Region (UMRR) InterLeague Organization has been the major focus on the sustainable water front since UMRR's launch in October 2015. An initiative begun by the Jo Daviess County League, UMRR has 60+ Leagues from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin supporting efforts to reduce nutrients (nitrogen & phosphorus) going into our waterways. Those nutrients in our tributaries that feed the Mississippi River have created the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Through a partnership with Rotary International, and with funding from other non-profit organizations, UMRR is engaging in watershed education throughout the region.

2016

LWVIL submitted comments on the proposed Total Maximum Daily Load standards for Mercury and PCBs in Lake Michigan Nearshore Waters to the Illinois EPA.

Increasing concentrations of pharmaceuticals are found in ground and surface waters across the state. LWV testified on behalf of the Cook County League in favor of an Ordinance creating a safe Pharmaceutical Disposal program for the county which was successful in 2016.

2018

The LWVIL Education Fund collaborated with LWV Jo Daviess County in a series of water protection projects. The first watershed plan for the County was published in 2018, as a result of these efforts. Additionally, in 2019, microplastic was discovered in the local groundwater for the first time.

2019

The Illinois EPA published a survey of water service line materials for the first time in 2019. Approximately one-fifth of the service lines in Illinois are lead, and the composition of two-thirds is unknown. The presence of lead pipes, or pipes with lead solder may threaten the safety of drinking water. A workshop was presented at the 2019 Issues Briefing and a bill that would remove dangerous water service lines over 10 years was among the focus legislation at the Lobby Day.

2020

LWVIL signed on to a letter urging the General Assembly to increase funding for water conservation.

Waste Management

LWVUS Position

The League supports:

- Policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes;
- Policies to ensure safe treatment, transportation, storage, and disposal of solid and hazardous wastes in order to protect public health and air, water, and land resources;
- Planning and decision-making processes that recognize suitable solid and hazardous wastes as potential resources;
- Policies for the management of civilian and military high- and low-level radioactive wastes to protect public health and air, water, and land resources;
- The establishment of processes for effective involvement of state and local governments and citizens in siting proposals for treatment, storage, disposal, and transportation of radioactive wastes;
- Full environmental review of treatment, storage, and disposal facilities for radioactive wastes; and
- Safe transport, storage, and disposal of radioactive wastes.

Criteria For Siting Waste Disposal Facilities

The following criteria are derived from the League's Natural Resources positions. They were developed to assist state and local Leagues in reviewing specific waste disposal sites and to help state and local Leagues evaluate both the process employed in site selection and the suitability of a proposed site or hazardous and radioactive waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities. This decision-making process should provide for:

- Ample and effective opportunities for public participation, including funding to conduct such participation;
- Evaluation of economic, social, and environmental impacts so that decision makers and the public have adequate information on which to base a decision. In addition to the actual site, secondary land use impacts—such as buffer areas; adequacy of roads, sewers, water; etc.— should be considered;
- An examination of alternative sites and methods of treatment and disposal. Comparison of costs must include short- and long-term costs, such as liability insurance; postclosure maintenance;

monitoring of ground and surface waters and air before and after closure; and potential loss of land or water resources due to contamination;

- Participation and review by all government levels to assure conformance with all adopted comprehensive plans at each level of government;
- Procedures for resolution of inter-governmental conflicts.
- Hazardous and radioactive waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities should be sited in areas that pose the least amount of risk to the public and to sensitive environmental areas. They should be located away from areas of critical concern such as:
 - Natural hazard areas subject to flooding, earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, or subsidence;
 - Drinking water supply sources, such as reservoirs, lakes, and rivers and their watersheds, and aquifers and their recharge areas;
 - Fragile land areas, such as shorelines of rivers, lakes, streams, oceans, estuaries, bays or wetlands;
 - Rare or valuable ecosystems or geologic formations, significant wildlife habitat, or unique scenic or historic areas;
 - Areas with significant renewable resource value, such as prime agricultural lands or grazing and forest lands that would be destroyed as a result of the siting of hazardous waste facilities; and
 - Residential areas, parks, and schools.

LWVIL Action

Source reduction, waste reduction and recycling measures have been high LWVIL priorities. Over the years, LWVIL supported:

- restrictions on packaging,
- recycling initiatives,
- planning mandates,
- the local review process for siting of landfills or incinerators,
- stronger state regulation of hazardous waste and low-level radioactive waste,
- pollution prevention initiatives and
- funding for cleanup of hazardous waste sites.

LWVIL also served on the state Task Force for the Development of Recycled Markets.

Many local Leagues were active in expanding recycling mandates and organizing waste reduction and recycling projects in their communities and co-sponsored IEPA household hazardous waste pick-up days.

1991

The LWVIL Solid Waste Legislation Committee researched and wrote two bills on household hazardous waste (HHW) which were introduced into the Illinois General Assembly in April. One bill required counties to plan a separate collection of HHW and the other banned HHW from landfills after 1996. Recognizing that an increasing deficit in state revenues would thwart passage of either bill, the committee worked to amend a bill which required the IEPA to plan to collect HHW from households and to distribute public information on HHW. The bill was signed into law in September of 1992.

1995

LWVIL co-sponsored with the IEPA six community outreach workshops throughout the state designed to inform plant managers, environmental managers and public relations managers on ways to conduct meaningful and effective community outreach programs. Members from six local Leagues participated in each of the meetings.

In support of the “reduce, reuse, recycle” components of the waste management hierarchy, as well as maximum protection of public health and the environment, the League lobbied successfully during the legislative session for the repeal of the Retail Rate Law of 1987 which subsidized incinerators.

The League was part of a statewide outreach panel organized by the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois (CICI) to address environmental, health and safety issues related to chemical manufacturing in Illinois and to

help shape a dialogue between the industry and the public. The panel is part of the Responsible Care Initiative launched in 1988 by the Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA).

2005

LWVIL also supported legislation strengthening Illinois EPA's enforcement authority when dealing with hazardous releases into the soil and groundwater, protecting public health and the environment as well as promoting public participation in environmental decision-making.

Nuclear Issues

LWVUS Position

The League's approach to nuclear issues is one of problem solving. The League's aim is to work constructively for the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment and for citizen participation in the decision-making process at all levels of government.

The League opposes "increased reliance on nuclear fission" but recognizes its place in the nation's energy mix. To achieve this objective:

- State and local Leagues may oppose licensing for construction of nuclear power plants based on the national position.
- State and local Leagues may oppose licensing for operation of these plants now under construction on a case-by-case basis, after careful consideration of the need for power and of available alternatives and after notifying the national board.
- State and local Leagues may support licensing for construction and operation of nuclear power plants only in special cases and only with prior permission from the national board.
- State and local Leagues may call for the closing of operating nuclear power plants because of specific non-generic health and safety problems, but only with prior permission from LWVUS.

Siting/Storage of High-Level Wastes (HLWs)

The disposal of HLWs is a national concern, and national policy should govern selection of any facilities constructed, whether an Away-From-Reactor (AFR) interim storage facility, a Monitored Retrievable System (MRS) facility, or a permanent geological repository. *The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982* sets forth a program for selection, authorization, and licensing of permanent repository sites and outlines programs for possible MRS and AFR facilities. In taking any action on this issue, LWVUS will work to ensure that HLWs are disposed of in a manner that protects public health and safety and the environment.

During the 1981–1982 congressional debate over disposal of nuclear wastes, LWVUS made several statements regarding storage and disposal. The League testified that the storage of HLWs from commercial reactors should be maximized at reactor sites; the League would support a utility-financed AFR facility if one were needed to prevent nuclear power plants from being forced to cease operations because of spent-fuel buildup. In addition, the League supports an active state role in the HLWs decision making process. These concerns, in addition to LWVUS positions on the process and criteria for siting and storage of HLWs, provide the foundation for LWVUS action.

While only a limited number of facilities will probably be built, LWVUS recognizes that Leagues located in states or communities under consideration as potential sites for such facilities may wish to act based on national positions. In that event, the state League, or a local League working in concert with the state League, must consult with LWVUS before taking any action. In making any action determinations on HLWs, LWVUS will consider three questions: 1) Is the proposed facility needed at this time? 2) Is the site suitable? and 3) Did the selection process provide ample and effective opportunities for public participation? Leagues requesting LWVUS clearance for action should address these questions, particularly the assessment of the suitability of a specific site.

State Leagues also should be alert to action opportunities relating to the process of state consultation and concurrence in the proposed sites.

Siting/Storage of Low-Level Wastes (LLWs)

The Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act of 1980 makes states responsible for the disposal of LLWs generated at commercial facilities within their borders. The act authorizes states to form regional compacts to establish disposal sites, and it allows states to refuse wastes from other states outside their compact region after January 1, 1986. State legislatures must approve a state's membership in a regional compact, but a compact does not become operational and legally binding until Congress consents to the agreement.

Appropriate State League Action

Some state Leagues are participating in state-level or regional-level discussions/negotiations over regional compacts and are seeking agreement on the compacts. LWWUS believes it is important for all state Leagues within a proposed compact region to work together to resolve any differences and establish agreement. Clearly, that agreement must be in accord with national positions. Because this is a national concern, LWWUS must review and approve any agreement reached among state Leagues in a compact region before state Leagues can take any action.

A state League in the proposed compact region that does not support the League agreement cannot act in opposition to that agreement. For example, if a state League disagrees with the approved League agreement, that state League can only lobby its state legislature either to withdraw from the proposed regional compact, i.e., “go it alone,” or to join another compact region. A state League also may request LWWUS permission to contact its U.S. senators and representatives at the time Congress considers ratification of the regional compact to lobby them to withdraw the state from the proposed compact. Some individual state Leagues have undertaken studies of proposed compacts for their regions and have reached consensus on a proposed regional compact. Again, that consensus must be in accord with national positions. In addition, before taking any action, the state League must obtain clearance from other state League boards in the proposed compact region because any action would involve government jurisdictions beyond that League. The state League also should consult LWWUS before acting.

A state League or a local League working with the state League can act on a proposed LLW disposal site based on the public participation process if it concludes the process was inadequate or based on a study of the environmental safety/suitability of the proposed disposal site (see Siting Criteria). If potential environmental impacts of a proposed site affect more than one League, clearance must be obtained from the relevant League boards before any action can be taken. If any unresolved differences develop among Leagues, LWWUS will decide the appropriate course of action.

Transportation of Nuclear Wastes

The League recognizes that transporting nuclear wastes increases the likelihood of accidents that could endanger public health. The League also recognizes that transportation is less risky than allowing these wastes to accumulate at an environmentally unsafe facility.

State and local Leagues can work to improve the regulation of transportation of nuclear wastes, but they cannot support “blanket bans” on transporting nuclear wastes through a region or city. There may be instances, however, in which a carefully thought-out ban, based on extensive League study, would be appropriate for a specific area. Such a study should include the overall subject of transporting and managing nuclear wastes, including regulation of types of wastes; packaging; escort; notification of routes to local and state authorities; effective emergency response; and the designating of routes that minimize health, safety, and environmental risks. The study should not be confined to one aspect of the transportation issue, such as routes.

If after a study of the wide-ranging issues involved, a League concludes that wastes should not be transported through an area, that League must discuss the results of the study and obtain clearance for any contemplated action from all appropriate levels of the League.

Defense Wastes

In managing high-level nuclear wastes, the League supports equivalent treatment of civilian and military wastes. The League supports the state consultation and concurrence process, consideration of environmental impacts of proposed sites, and NRC licensing for defense waste facilities, as well as for civilian waste facilities. The League's position on equivalent treatment of all wastes includes transportation of defense wastes. Low-level defense wastes include wastes from military medical programs, naval shipyards that maintain nuclear-powered naval vessels, and research facilities. The treatment of low-level defense wastes, however, is not spelled out in the *Low-level Waste Policy Act* of 1980. Most low-level defense wastes are disposed of in special federal facilities; however, some are disposed of in existing commercial sites.

Leagues may take the same action on transporting, siting, and storing defense wastes as on civilian wastes. Action on defense wastes should be in accordance with any relevant future National Security position(s) developed by the League.

Inter-League Cooperation

Leagues contemplating action on nuclear waste issues should keep in mind that any action almost invariably will affect areas beyond their jurisdiction. Thus, in all cases, local Leagues should clear action with the state League and the League boards at the appropriate jurisdictional levels.

One example of necessary inter-League action on a regional level is the low-level radioactive waste compacting process. The League believes this is an important national, state, and local concern aimed at responsible management and disposal of low-level wastes. Many state Leagues are actively participating in their regional processes, and some are taking consensus on the issue.

LWVIL Action

1990–91

LWVIL served as grant administrator for a fund established by the Illinois and Kentucky Compact Commission to enable citizens to participate fully in the public hearing process on the siting of an Illinois low-level radioactive waste facility.

1996

League reviewed applications from Illinois nonprofit groups for technical assistance grant funds made available by the Central Midwest Low-Level Radioactive Waste Compact Commission. These grants allowed the groups to hire technical advisors for the understanding of the criteria and technical issues as well as presenting testimony to the Illinois Low-Level Radioactive Waste Task Group.

2002

League, and coalition partners, spoke at a press conference in asking U.S. Senators to vote against a national high-level waste repository at Yucca Mountain.

2015

In early 2015, at the request of the Downers Grove-Woodridge-Lisle League, LWVIL prepared testimony to present to the DuPage County Board opposing construction of an underground low-mid grade nuclear waste storage facility near the shores of Lake Huron. LWVIL and LWVUS approved the testimony and all the DuPage Leagues signed on. The County adopted a resolution opposing the project and it is now part of their legislative agenda in Washington. They join Cook County and hundreds of other local governments in both the US and Canada opposing the facility.

LWVIL and local leagues in DuPage and Cook Counties (with LWVUS permission) successfully lobbied local units of government to take action opposing construction of an underground low/mid grade nuclear waste storage facility near the shores of Lake Huron. The proposed facility is opposed by hundreds of local and tribal governments in both the US and Canada; the Canadian government is still considering the proposal in 2017.

Going forward: Unresolved nuclear storage and transportation issues are an important state concern given that Illinois has the most nuclear power facilities of any state in the country. Nuclear waste is currently stored on-site, at both operating and retired facilities.

A new presidential administration in Washington, as well as continuing reports of radiation problems at the damaged Fukushima (Japan) nuclear plant, and radiation leaks at a military nuclear waste facility in Hanford, WA in 2017, are bringing nuclear waste issues back to the forefront.

Although the Obama administration tabled plans for deep storage of spent nuclear fuel at Yucca Mountain, NV, the new administration and members of Congress began steps to restore the site in the summer of 2017.

2020

The League signed on to a letter from Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS) that states:

- Nuclear waste should not be downgraded to a lesser risk level than currently listed.
- Nuclear waste should not be disposed of in local landfills.

Transfer of Federal Public Lands

2020

LWVUS Position

The League believes that federal public lands should benefit all Americans. The lands should remain under the jurisdiction of the federal government and be managed according to the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield policy. We support improvements in management and regulation. Federal law allows for the sale or exchange of federal lands if it is in the public interest. Prior to any transfer, a comprehensive assessment that covers the following issues should be performed:

- Environmental analysis, including air and water quality, biodiversity, endangered and threatened species.
- Health impacts.
- Environmental justice.
- Suitability of proposed land use.
- Subsurface resources.
- Financial and economic impacts.
- Cultural resources.
- Public access.
- Management for fire and other natural disasters.
- Consultation with tribal governments

The League is opposed to the sale of federal lands to private entities except for small tracts surrounded by nonfederal lands. The League is opposed to the transfer of subsurface rights to the state or other entities. Any development of subsurface rights on federal land should benefit all Americans.

Climate Change

2019

LWVUS Position

The League believes that climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and our planet.

The League believes that 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.

Statement of Position on Price on Carbon Resolution adopted by the delegates to the 2018 LWVUS Convention:

The League of Women Voters stands united with, and in support of, efforts to price carbon emissions, whether cap-and-trade, carbon tax/fee, or another viable pricing mechanism. The League does not have a position on how the revenue generated is to be used. We do not espouse any single method of pricing carbon over another. We will evaluate all proposed methods based on their effectiveness to abate emissions and whether the method can be successfully implemented.

LWVIL Action

2019

Several local Illinois Leagues, in consultation with LWVIL and the LWVUS Climate Change Task Force, held informational meetings to raise awareness of the potential of carbon pricing as a factor in reducing CO₂ emissions and further efforts along these lines are anticipated in the coming years.

2021

- In July, the Metropolitan Mayors' Caucus, a 275-member organization, presented a regional climate action plan (CAP) designed to reduce the risk of climate hazards in the Chicagoland area, such as heat, flooding, drought, water supply and air quality. Government leaders from more than 200 communities, with help from NOAA and other climate experts, spent two years working on the plan to identify climate change mitigation goals such as developing clean energy alternatives, reducing how much people drive, improving energy use in buildings and managing water and waste in more sustainable ways. The goal is to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) 80% within the next 30 years (2050). Scientists suggest that recent pledges by the US and other nations could help cap global warming at 2 degrees Celsius or 3.6 Fahrenheit by the end of the century if greenhouse gas emissions move to net zero by 2050.
- July 2021, LWVIL signed on to a letter requesting PACE to invest in purchasing electric buses rather than diesel. Local leagues were also asked to sign on. Over 800 requests were sent in and PACE responded that they would budget for electric bus purchases. As an example, school buses may cost about \$300,000 or nearly 3 times the cost of a similarly sized diesel bus, but estimated to be comparable over the life of the bus to diesel by savings from cost of operation and significant environmental and air quality benefits.

Public Participation

1986–88

LWVUS Position

The League believes that public understanding and cooperation are essential to the responsible and responsive management of our nation's natural resources. The public has a right to know about pollution levels, dangers to health and the environment, and proposed resource management policies and options. The public has a right to participate in decision-making at each phase in the process and at each level of government involvement. Officials should make a special effort to develop readily understandable procedures for public involvement and to ensure that the public has adequate information to participate effectively. Public records should be readily accessible at all governmental levels. Adequate funding is needed to ensure opportunities for public education and effective public participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.

The appropriate level of government should publicize, in an extensive and timely manner and in readily available sources, information about pollution levels, pollution-abatement programs, and resource management policies and options. Hearings should be held in easily accessible locations, at convenient times and, when possible, in the area concerned. The hearing procedures and other opportunities for public comment should actively encourage citizen participation in decision-making.

The League supports public education that provides a basic understanding of the environment and the social, economic, and environmental costs and benefits of environmental protection, pollution control, and conservation.

Mechanisms for citizen appeal must be guaranteed, including access to the courts. Due process rights for the affected public and private parties must be assured.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL regularly takes action on Natural Resources positions, applying the principles listed in the position.

2020–2021

League continued to advocate for passage of the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) or CEJA-like bill with its coalition partners and League chapters. As the pandemic stopped in-person events, action continued through zoom for education and involvement. In February 2021, LWVIL Issues Briefing featured speakers on environmental injustice issues and Muni co-ops and their continued reliance on fossil fuels and resistance to clean energy initiatives.

Agriculture Policies

1988

LWVUS Position

LWVUS believes that federal agriculture policies should promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers, farms that are economically viable, farm practices that are environmentally sound, and increased reliance on the free market to determine prices.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE. Federal policy should encourage a system of sustainable, regenerative agricultural production that moves toward an environmentally sound agricultural sector. This includes promoting stewardship to preserve and protect the country's human and natural agricultural resources.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. Agricultural research, development, and technical assistance should continue to be a major federal function. Resources should be targeted to developing sustainable agricultural practices and addressing the needs of mid-size farms.

AGRICULTURAL PRICES. LWVUS supports an increasing reliance on the free market to determine the price of agricultural commodities and the production decisions of farmers, in preference to traditional price support mechanisms.

AGRICULTURE AND TRADE. U.S. efforts should be directed toward expanding export markets for our agricultural products while minimizing negative effects on developing nations' economies. Consistent with the League's trade position, multilateral trade negotiations should be used to reduce other countries' barriers and/or subsidies protecting their agricultural products.

FARM CREDIT. Farmers should have access to credit with reasonable terms and conditions. Federally provided farm credit is essential to maintaining the viability of farm operations when the private sector is unable or unwilling to provide the credit farmers need.

Of these policies, the League believes the most essential for the future of agriculture are: encouraging sustainable agriculture; providing research, information, and technical assistance to agricultural producers; and increasing reliance on the free market to determine prices.

Statement of Position on Federal Agriculture Policies as announced by the National Board, May 2014:

The League believes that government should provide financial support for agriculture that includes practices. Support should be extended to specialty crops (such as fruits, vegetables, and nuts), new production methods (such as organic, hydroponic, and urban practices), and farms that supply local and regional markets

Subsidized crop yield insurance should be linked to implementation of best management practices with the subsidy denied for marginal or environmentally sensitive land. The premium subsidy for crop insurance should be available for a wide range of crops, such as fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops. Government should limit the amount of the premium subsidy received by larger farms.

The League supports policies that increase competition in agricultural markets. Antitrust laws should be enforced to ensure competitive agricultural markets. Alternative marketing systems such as regional hub markets, farmers' markets, and farmer cooperatives should be promoted.

Clean air and water regulations should apply to all animal and aquaculture production and processing facilities, and not just to the very large confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Such regulations should be designed in a manner that takes into account environmentally sound technologies and the scale of the operation being regulated. Small-size operations should not be granted automatic exemption from regulation.

The League believes that government regulatory agencies dealing with animal and aquaculture production should have adequate authority and funding to 1) enforce regulations and 2) gather information that supports monitoring the impacts of all animal feeding and aquaculture operations on human and animal health and the environment.

Government should fund basic research related to agriculture. Government-funded research should also address the impact of new technologies on human health and the environment prior to widespread adoption of products developed with such technologies. Assessment of products developed with new technologies should be conducted as transparently as possible, while respecting intellectual property rights. Research should be funded to support the continuation of diversified and sustainable agricultural systems, such as seed banking and promoting and preserving genetic diversity.

To provide adequate safety of our food supply, the government should:

- Clarify and enforce pre-market testing requirements for foods and food additives developed using any new chemical technology, such as genetic engineering or nanotechnology;
- Require developers to monitor all such new food products developed after releasing to the market;
- Require developers of such new food products to provide data and other materials to independent third parties for pre- and post-marketing safety assessment;
- Fund independent third-party risk assessment examining how long term and multiple exposures to such new foods affect human health and the environment;
- Withdraw marketing approval and require recall if such products are shown to be unsafe;
- Require post-market monitoring of human health and environmental impacts for pharmaceutical applications used in animal and aquaculture production;
- Limit use of antibiotics in animal production to the treatment of disease;
- Promote crop management practices that decrease dependency on added chemicals; and
- Fund, employ, and train sufficient personnel for assessment and compliance functions of regulatory agencies.

The League supports government developing and requiring more informative and standardized definitions on product labeling. Food labeling and advertising should display only approved health and safety claims and an accurate representation of the required ingredient and nutrition lists. The League supports consumer education about labeling of foods developed using any new technology.

LWVIL Action

LWVUS demonstrated great foresight when, in 1988, it adopted an agriculture position supporting sustainable agriculture. In 2011, the Illinois League, seeing increased public interest in sustainability as well as division over contentious food and agricultural issues, appointed a Sustainable Food & Water Issue Specialist to the Issues Committee.

2010–2013

As the public continued to question where and how its food is produced, LWWIL raised the profile of agriculture and food issues within League, through both education and advocacy, at the local and national level. To that end, caucus presentations on agriculture/food were held at the 2010 & 2012 national conventions and 2011 & 2013 Illinois state conventions, the 2012 Illinois Issues Briefing, and to local Leagues during this time frame. In addition, LWWVUS was petitioned in 2012, 2013, and 2014 to make agriculture issues a legislative priority; Illinois League members met with LWWVUS on several occasions to discuss advocacy efforts, as well as with members of Congress and their staff on Farm Bill conservation funding.

With growing member interest and momentum building, Illinois Leagues collaborated with the Chester County, PA League at the 2012 national convention on a motion to update the agriculture position adopted in 1988. Convention delegates approved the motion and in 2013 the background study materials, consensus questions, and Leaders' Guide were developed. Following study and consensus in 2014, LWWVUS adopted an updated agriculture position in May 2014. The 2014 study examined many contemporary topics (e.g. genetically modified foods and their labeling, use of antibiotics in animal production, concentrated animal feeding operations) but did not update parts of the 1988 position (e.g. agriculture and trade).

As an outgrowth of their involvement with educating the public on issues related to concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in 2011 (See the LWWIL position on Large-Scale Livestock Facilities), the Jo Daviess County League spearheaded a watershed planning effort in the county, convening a committee representing a cross-section of stakeholders, including agricultural interests. This laid the groundwork for their collaboration with Leagues from Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota to create the Upper Mississippi River Region (UMRR) ILO in 2015. Agricultural practices in the Upper Mississippi River Region have contributed significantly to the high levels of phosphorus and nitrogen that created the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone. USEPA has required each of the 12 states bordering the Mississippi to develop strategies to substantially reduce the loss of these nutrients by 2025. The UMRR ILO will engage in watershed literacy initiatives, monitor state, regional, and federal proposals affecting the region's interests, as well as coordinate advocacy efforts across state lines and congressional districts focusing on regional natural resource issues, beginning with reducing the loss of nutrients.

2015–2017

The work of the Upper Mississippi River Region (UMRR) InterLeague Organization has been the major focus on the sustainable water front since UMRR's launch in October 2015. An initiative begun by the Jo Daviess County League, UMRR has 60+ Leagues from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin supporting efforts to reduce nutrients (nitrogen & phosphorus) going into our waterways. Those nutrients in our tributaries that feed the Mississippi River have created the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Through a partnership with Rotary International, and with funding from other non-profit organizations, UMRR is engaging in watershed education throughout the region. It joins its sister organization, LWW Lake Michigan Region, in this mission.

LWWIL Positions: Natural Resources

Land Use

Comprehensive Land Use Policy

1972, 1973, 1974

Revised in 1975, 1977, 1997, and 1999

LWWIL Position

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports:

- Development of a comprehensive land use policy for Illinois that provides for orderly growth while preserving the environment, conservation of natural resources, preservation of open space and protection of prime agricultural land from lesser uses and intensive development.
- The League believes the State should establish the long-range goals of a comprehensive land use policy and that the State should identify, plan for, and have the final authority over all key and critical areas in the state. The State should develop standards and broad guidelines for land use, but local governments should make purely local decisions. The State should assist local governments with professional help and should encourage and facilitate intergovernmental cooperation.
- A state agency with adequate staff and funding should be responsible for forming and implementing land use decisions. Opportunities for citizen participation should be available at every stage of land use planning.
- Conservation of natural resources must be the established policy of the state, and citizens should be made aware of the role they can play in conservation. Comprehensive land use planning and citizen education are the major thrusts to harmonize growth and the preservation of resources.
- The League supports regional planning and continuous mandatory funding for regional planning agencies from local, state and federal resources (see also LWVUS Natural Resources position).

Background

The study of land use issues in Illinois began in 1971, continued through 1974, and ran concurrently with a 1972 national study. While the broad goals of each consensus are nearly identical, the state positions are more specific and enhance the national position.

Development Impact Fees

1997

LWVIL Position

The League supports legislation at the state level regarding development impact fees. It is appropriate for such legislation to address fees for capital expenditures for schools, libraries, parks/open space, transportation, utilities and emergency services.

Such legislation should be enabling only, and not directive. Only municipalities and counties should have the authority to assess development impact fees, and state guidelines should be adaptable to home rule and non-home rule communities. The test for validity of impact fees in Illinois should be “rational nexus” and not “specifically and uniquely attributable.”

Enabling legislation should strive to effect some standardization of impact fee programs statewide, with flexibility for each to be designed to meet local needs.

Background

Delegates to the 1997 LWVIL Convention adopted by concurrence a position on development impact fees, developed and presented by the LWV of the Barrington Area. This League's local study of impact fees in 1990 revealed that only enabling legislation for road impact fees existed at the state level. Communities enacting impact fees ordinances for other capital projects were doing so without state legislative guidelines, perhaps risking legal challenges. Legislation to set standards for the use of impact fees is viewed as a benefit to local governments as they deal with development and its associated costs.

LWVIL Action

The land use position has been used to:

- Support passage of legislation that **protects prime farmland** from lesser uses.
- Educate League members and other citizens on the need to **preserve farmland** from erosion and over-development.
- Participate in a **conflict resolution project** with farm groups and other environmental organizations.
- Support legislation to **identify wetlands needing protection**, followed by participation in a state advisory committee to implement the law.
- Support 1991 legislation giving the state some **jurisdiction over dwindling wetlands**.

- Provide local League testimony in opposition to the destruction of local **wetlands**, most recently in **Lake County**.
- Promote intergovernmental cooperation and public involvement in implementing a **comprehensive plan for Lake County**, providing a balance for orderly growth and transportation needs while protecting the environment, conserving natural resources and preserving natural heritage.
- Support a position by the Naperville League on long-term ecological impacts and public health concerns of the **Naperville Park District's trap-shooting program** in an area containing wetlands and provide comments to regulating authorities on the issuance of a permit for continuance of the trap-shooting program.
- Lobby (1999), at the request of the Cook County League, in opposition to developing land on the **west bank of the Des Plaines River** in the Chevalier Woods Forest Preserve, which is both forest and flood plain, as a gambling casino.
- Sponsor informational meetings and symposiums related to the economic, social and environmental problems associated with uncontrolled growth or **urban sprawl and "smart growth"** solutions to these problems, beginning in the late 1990s.
- Establish a task force (1998) to develop a process for local Leagues to follow in addressing **transportation issues**, including the active inclusion of public participation in local transportation needs and issues.
- In 1999, establish a **Smart Growth committee** to educate and encourage local League participation with their communities on issues related to uncontrolled growth and work on related issues at the state level. Presented a "smart growth" panel at the LWVIL 2000 Issues Briefing.
- Established a working relationship with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) to promote the regional planning process and facilitate meetings throughout the Chicago region.
- Established a working relationship with the Center for Neighborhood Technology to improve public participation in regional planning in the six Chicago area counties.
- In 2001, worked in coalition to pass (unsuccessfully) a series of seven "smart growth" bills.
- Testified in support of additional public transportation.
- Participated as a public member in the General Assembly's "Illinois Growth Task Force."
- Monitored and supported legislation that balances the desire for growth of communities with the need to protect farmland, green spaces and air and water quality, as well as promoting transportation options and increased housing availability.
- In 2002 and 2003, LWVIL partnered with the **Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission's** comprehensive land use planning process for the 2030 plan and was represented at planning sessions held by **Metropolis 2020**.
- LWVIL testified at the recertification hearing to keep the **Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS)** as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the greater Chicagoland area. LWVIL also testified for the Illinois Growth Task Force and approved findings of the Committee.
- LWVIL testified before a Senate committee, sent out action alerts and worked with coalition partners for Tollway reform.
- In 2008, LWVIL monitored Blagojevich administration budget cuts affecting open spaces and natural areas protections and causing **state parks and historic sites closures**. The Legislature's action and support from Gov. Quinn in 2009 restored some funding and reopened state parks.
- Supported statewide land acquisition programs to **Illinois' natural heritage**.
- Opposed a bill to divert State revenue to private developers to build on a 100 year floodplain passed through the legislature in 2009. The League urged Gov. Quinn to veto the bill and he subsequently issued an amendatory veto.

2020–2021

- LWVIL joined teams with the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) and Downstate Caucus to target the protection and/or restoration of Illinois land and water to meet President Biden's "America the Beautiful" plan. The plan calls for 30% of all land and water to be protected or preserved by 2030 in order to protect biodiversity, water tables and healthy environments. This is an international goal in order to mitigate climate change, water pollution and use, healthy biodiversity and soil, insect, animal and human health, and carbon capture. IL currently has about 4% of land protected. Currently, about 75 to 90% of all Illinois land is considered agriculture. Restoration and protection of land and water includes restoration of wetlands.
- LWVIL sent a letter to Senator Durbin in support of the Shedd Aquarium's request for FY2022 spending request to advance the Chicago River Habitat Conservation, Restoration, and

Conservation Jobs Training Pilot Program at Park 571 (Chicago River Conservation Jobs Pilot Project). The Chicago River project is a partnership between the Shedd Aquarium and the Chicago Park District, the country's largest municipal park manager. Designed to address the urgent intersecting needs of re-building the Illinois economy while addressing decades of harm by legacy pollution on the South Branch of the Chicago River by creating conservation job and career readiness opportunities for youth and community members. This locally led conservation and restoration effort will aid in building climate resilience, reduce storm-water pollution and flooding while providing front-line communities more equitable access to the outdoors.

Large-Scale Livestock Facilities

1999

LWVIL Position

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports strict regulations of large-scale livestock facilities on the state, regional and/or county levels to include:

1. Appropriate statewide environmental controls:
 - a. implement siting criteria to protect water sensitive areas;
 - b. require that all large-scale livestock facilities management plans be submitted to the appropriate agency and be available to the public;
 - c. require that rates of the most potentially damaging components (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, heavy metals) be used as parameters for livestock waste application on crops to minimize land and water pollution;
 - d. require set back distances from bodies of water, wells for human consumption and residences necessary to protect public health;
 - e. require owners to provide bonding, insurance indemnity funds or other financial assurances to ensure that the owners, not the taxpayers, pay for the cost of cleanups from spills or closing of facilities;
 - f. require inspections more frequently than once per year to ensure compliance with environmental standards and practices;
 - g. extend current rules for lagoons to all types of waste handling facilities;
 - h. not distinguish between farm and non-farm residences in setback distances from facilities.
2. Public hearing to give notice of the intention to site a facility, determine compliance with state, regional and/or local criteria, and determine compliance with state environmental criteria.
3. Regional and/or county control of siting.

Background

1999

LWVIL Convention delegates adopted by concurrence a position on large-scale livestock facilities developed by the Jackson County League. Local Leagues held informational and roundtable discussions on the environmental and economic impacts of increased livestock production in Illinois.

Large-scale livestock facilities regulations were negotiated and passed by the General Assembly as part of the Livestock Management Facilities Act.

2005

LWVIL was concerned that the Illinois Livestock Development Initiative, an outcome of a Livestock Summit convened by the governor, would streamline environmental controls, change setback requirements, and limit public participation relating to the siting and operations of such facilities in the state.

2008–2011

Mega Dairy Proposal for Jo Daviess County

A new dairy that would have been the largest such farming operation in the state, was proposed for northwestern Illinois. The area's karst geology, opponents claimed, is such that a manure pond leak could quickly contaminate local groundwater and spills could contaminate surface water. Although the Jo Daviess County Board rejected the proposal and the Galena City Council called for a county moratorium on large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) approved

the permit. A series of lawsuits ensued while animosity between dairy proponents and opponents grew. The courts eventually ruled in the dairy's favor, but the owners decided to move elsewhere, leaving the community divided.

The Jo Daviess County LWV decided to act both to become better informed on the issue and to help rebuild community. A day-long public seminar was held in June 2011. The seminar addressed the history and changing economics of the dairy industry, as well as county, state & federal agricultural siting frameworks, and state regulations of these facilities. A 4-disc CD set was made of this event, and the Jo Daviess League continued to interview and videotape both proponents and opponents of the proposed dairy to increase their own knowledge of the complex economic, environmental and social issues presented by such enterprises. It has participated in discussions with other stakeholders regarding the possible use of methane digester technology for manure treatment.

2012

LWVIL joined a coalition of environmental & industry groups to support a negotiated bill establishing permit fees for CAFOs required to have a NPDES discharge permit. An April 2012 TFA urged League members to ask their legislators for support. The bill became law.

Contemporaneous with the Jo Daviess County mega-dairy proposal, citizen opponents petitioned USEPA to withdraw Illinois EPA's approval to administer the Clean Water Act citing IEPA's failure to update NPDES permitting requirements for CAFOs, among other things. Finding Illinois EPA's program deficient, USEPA required Illinois to adopt such rules and take other relevant actions to enhance environmental protection. In 2012, Illinois EPA proposed such rules to the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) and this rulemaking (R2012-023 and 023A) continued through 2015. The IPCB adopted new regulations in 2014 and concluded rulemaking on all aspects in June 2015 following IPCB's reconsideration of its proposal regarding creation of a CAFO inventory. League members attended public hearings and LWVIL submitted multiple written comments at various stages in this process.

Pesticides

1991

LWVIL Position

- The League supports the reduction of exposure to all pesticides and urges the use of non-toxic alternatives.
- Governmental bodies should encourage a reduction in pesticide use through the promotion of management programs such as integrated pest management, sustainable agriculture and non-toxic control techniques.

Background

Adopted at 1991 LWVIL Convention, based on a 1990 Lake Michigan LWV position.

LWVIL Action

Supported Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policies, especially in schools, and opposed the preemption of local governmental pesticide regulations. Local Leagues co-sponsored sustainable agriculture conferences and integrated pest management forums; worked with school districts on IPM implementation.

1993

As part of a statewide local League network, several local Leagues joined the efforts of the Illinois Pesticide Education Network and the Safer Pest Control Project, gathering and sharing information on better and safer ways to prevent problems in the home and community.

1996

LWVIL joined the Yards for Nature Campaign to inform the public about the hazards of unnecessary chemical pesticides on lawns and green space and to provide resources on non-chemical alternatives.

1998

Participated in the Safer Pest Control Project task force, identifying policies and programs to protect children from unnecessary exposure to pesticides.

1999

League joined A Better Choice Campaign for Healthier Schools formed by the task force. Successes included amending the Structural Pest Control Act to require the adoption of an IPM program in schools and changes to the Illinois Pesticide Act requiring parent and staff notification prior to pesticide application inside school buildings and on school grounds.

2002

LWVIL attended the Healthy Schools summit and joined the Illinois Healthy Schools Campaign, a statewide coalition working to heighten awareness with legislators, schools, and parents on the need for environmentally safe schools.

2008

January 1, 2008, the Structural Pest Control Act expired after legislation to extend a sunset provision in the Act did not pass. LWVIL supported Legislation to extend the Act to December 31, 2009; it passed both the Illinois House and Senate, one of the few environmental legislative successes of the Spring 2008 session.

2009

Legislation to extend the repeal date of the Structural Pest Control Act to 2019 did not pass. League supported successful legislation regulating the pesticide application in schools and childcare centers and recommending a Pesticide-Free Turf Care program

Water-Great Lakes Ecosystem

2013

LWVIL Position

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem. We support the attainment and maintenance of high water quality standards throughout the Great Lakes Basin, with emphasis on water pollution prevention. Water conservation should be a high priority of all governments in the Basin.

I. Protective Measures

To achieve protection and improvement of this valuable, international resource, the League of Women Voters of Illinois supports efforts to:

- Limit uses of "fragile," historical, cultural and scenic shoreline areas.
- Preserve wild and pristine areas within the watershed, with no new development in these special habitats without adherence to strict criteria as prescribed by federal, state, or local governments.
- Provide for appropriate recreational opportunities in and public access to sensitive areas without destruction or harm to the ecosystem.
- Protect the quality of the air and waters of the ecosystem by strict adherence to agricultural, industrial, residential, environmental, and commercial zoning regulations that prohibit the introduction of toxic or polluting discharges or detrimental land use techniques within the Basin.
- Protect the remaining dune formations. Enforce strict regulations of sand dune mining or development on the dunes.
- Strengthen upstream land management to eliminate sources of siltation and pollution.
- Control the invasion and spread of non-native aquatic and terrestrial nuisance species.

II. Threats to the Ecosystem

The League of Women Voters of Illinois opposes the following activities as they can lead to the degradation of the special natural resources of the Great Lakes Ecosystem: ● Inefficient or excessive water uses. Proposals for new or increased withdrawals within the Basin, e.g. for agricultural or municipal uses, should be carefully evaluated before being

permitted. Withdrawals should be regularly monitored for potential or actual damage to the ecosystem.

- Destruction of marshes and other wetlands throughout the watershed. Mitigation should be accepted only as a last resort. Mitigation proposals should be rigorously evaluated and projects should be strictly monitored to assure no net loss to the ecosystem.
- New or increased diversions or transfers by any means of Great Lakes waters and adjacent ground waters to a place outside the Basin. Projects already in place should be carefully monitored and restricted if there is evidence of damage to the ecosystem.
- Dredging and filling of river inlets, harbors, lakes or wetlands except for tightly- controlled, non-degrading and non-repetitive activities.
- Discharge to air or water of toxic pollutants and other material from industrial, agricultural, residential or commercial operations that may damage the ecosystem in violation of laws and ordinances.

III. Public Participation

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports informed and responsible action on behalf of the preservation of the Great Lakes Ecosystem. Relevant information should be readily available to the public. Opportunities for public input should be timely, accessible, convenient and well advertised.

IV. Role of Government

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports:

- Coordination of functions among various governmental agencies charged with protecting the Great Lakes and elimination of unnecessary overlap.
- Use of area-wide coordinated management plans and techniques in the solving of Great Lakes Ecosystem problems.
- Participation by all affected governments in the Basin in review and decision- making on Great Lakes agreements and projects, facilitated in open meetings and hearings.
- Strengthening of existing mechanisms for intergovernmental discussions and decision-making.
- Separation of responsibility for submitting recommendations for governmental projects from issuing permits for such projects.
- Monitoring and enforcement of treaties, ordinances, laws and master plans.

V. Research Priorities

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes that research on Great Lakes issues should focus on:

- Effective, non-toxic control and removal of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species.
- Restoration of health to the overall resource.
- Survival of native aquatic and terrestrial species and their nutrient sources.
- Continual testing of Great Lakes water quality for impact from the following: pesticides and fertilizers, resistant bacteria, persistent pharmaceuticals and other chemicals.
- Evaluation of water accountability systems, groundwater monitoring and water use planning and conservation efforts throughout the Basin.

LWVIL Action

The U.S.S. Badger, a ferry running between Wisconsin and Michigan, was subject to a federal Consent Decree requiring that it cease its practice of dumping untreated coal ash into Lake Michigan. In April, 2012, LWVIL submitted comments to the Assistant Attorney General asking for a strengthened Decree, including a reduction in the time allowed for compliance. Earlier, LWVIL submitted letters to the editor opposing the toxic pollution.

Concerned about potential leaks from oil pipelines that run adjacent to Lake Michigan, LWVIL joined partners in 2013 in requesting a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the tar sands pipelines.

Invasive species coming into U.S.waters are of great concern. The League is monitoring efforts to prevent an Asian Carp invasion into Lake Michigan and to control the introduction and spread of non-indigenous species from ships discharging ballast water.

LWVIL-EF carried out clean water education projects, often working with local Leagues. Through the 2016 “Rooting for Clean Water” program funded by an Illinois Coastal Management Grant, materials on the role

of native plants in helping to clean water were created. Approximately 1000 flyers and 100 bumper stickers were distributed to local Leagues, members, and others along the Lake Michigan coast. A very successful workshop was held in August, 2016 with a bus tour of a Wilmette prairie and several home landscapes to learn how to use native plants. Hundreds of additional materials provided by the LWV Lake Michigan Region, our collaborator in this project, were distributed to and through Illinois Leagues outside of the coastal area. A powerpoint presentation remains available to garden clubs and other groups that would like the separation of the watersheds to prevent the transfer of nonnative species, and urging better public outreach to Illinois citizens on these matters.

Working with LWV Lake Michigan Region and the Healing Our Waters Coalition, LWVIL continues to support implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration and continued funding of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Illinois League members have traveled to Washington DC for Great Lakes Lobby Day annually to express the League's support for robust federal funding of projects benefitting the lakes, including removal of toxic sediment, to learn about native plants' role as nature's water treatment plants.

The LWVILEF acquired two watershed demonstration models with funding through a second IL Department of Natural Resources grant. Seventeen volunteers were trained to use the models to demonstrate watershed dynamics and sources of water pollution. The model has been and will continue to be used for public outreach and community events throughout 2017.

LWVIL has worked toward banning coal tar sealants, a source of water pollution. Organic compounds in these sealants are harmful to human, animal, and aquatic ecosystem health. The League supported legislation that would ban these substances statewide for the past three years. Local Leagues in home rule municipalities are supporting local bans and this work is ongoing. Amendment 2 to HB 2958 would allow non-home rule communities (most with fewer than 25,000 population) to pass bans as well. Congratulations are due to the LWV of Wilmette for successfully advocating for its Village ban of coal tar sealants

2015–17

LWVIL asked LWVUS to sign on to a letter requesting continued Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding in July, 2015

- Issued a TFA requesting calls to Senator Kirk to express disappointment with his co-sponsorship of a bill that would weaken the Clean Water Act in November, 2015.
- Submitted comments on the proposed Total Maximum Daily Load standards for Mercury and PCBs in Lake Michigan Nearshore Waters to the Illinois EPA in February, 2016. Very significant reductions of both pollutants are required to meet federal water quality standards. League comments emphasized that a strong implementation plan is needed, and that the Waukegan Generating Station and coal-fired power plants in neighboring states create air pollution that must also be addressed to achieve healthier water.
- Asked local Leagues to request that their state legislators co-sponsor a bill banning coal tar sealants in 2016 Legislative Interviews. Several Leagues reported that their legislators asked for more information. LWVIL President Mary Kubasak responded directly with follow-up letters to the legislators.
- Testified on behalf of the Cook County League in favor of an Ordinance creating a safe Pharmaceutical Disposal program for the county. An amended version passed on October 26, 2016.

Two federal issues commanded attention in 2017. The first was budgetary: LWVIL advocated for maintaining the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) program at \$300 million, the same level it had been funded at in recent years. The administration eliminated the program in its proposed budget. After outcry from League members and many others in the region, full funding was restored in the budget by and was approved by the House and the Senate appropriation committees. The federal budget process continues at the time of submission of this report. We also supported adequate and increased funding for other federal water infrastructure programs.

The rescission and recodification of the Waters of the U.S. Rule under the Clean Water Act was the second federal water issue that LWVIL addressed. The 2015 rule, supported by the League, clarified which waters are subject to Clean Water Act regulations. The administration seeks to extend the date the rule goes into

effect by two years so it will have more time to consider a replacement rule. The League opposed the rescission of the current rule.

LWVIL:

- Issued a TFA in March supporting HB 2958, a Coal Tar Ban. In May, the proposed legislation was amended to allow non-home-rule municipalities to adopt local bans on coal tar sealants. LWVIL sent out a second TFA supporting the amended bill, and also provided a template for a Letter to the Editor to local Leagues. The bill failed to pass for the third year.
- Issued a TFA supporting federal FY2018 GLRI funding at \$300 million. A Letter to the Editor template was sent to the local Leagues in April.
- Signed on to a letter in September initiated by the Healing Our Waters Coalition opposing the repeal of the Clean Water Rule.

In 2017, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released its study and tentative recommendation of how to prevent Asian carp and other invasive species from using the Illinois Sanitary and Ship Canal to spread between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River watersheds. The tentative plan is a multiprong approach that includes construction of a third electric barrier at the Brandon Road locks. The proposed completion of the project is in 2028. The LWV Lake Michigan Region submitted comments criticizing the plan as too little, too late, but recommending installation of the parts of the plan that can be implemented quickly as interim measures. The Army Corps is in the process of reviewing comments from the public and should issue a final plan by 2019.

2020–21

LWVIL signed on to ten letters:

- Requesting that Congress allocated funding to Great Lakes Restoration and other Great Lakes Infrastructure projects.
- Supporting the US EPA and Army Corps of Engineers' redefinition of "Waters of the United States" to expand the federal Clean Water Act jurisdiction to protect wetlands and Great Lakes Basin water quality.

LWVUS Positions: Social Policy

LWVUS Position

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

Equality of Opportunity

1969, 1972, 1980, 1989, 2010

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment, and housing for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Employment opportunities in modern, technological societies are closely related to education; therefore, the League supports federal programs to increase the education and training of disadvantaged people. The League supports federal efforts to prevent and/or remove discrimination in education, employment, and housing and to help communities bring about racial integration of their school systems.

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all regardless of sex. The League supports action to bring laws into compliance with the ERA: a) to eliminate or amend those laws that have

the effect of discriminating on the basis of sex; b) to promote laws that support the goals of the ERA; c) to strengthen the enforcement of such existing laws.

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

Further Guidelines And Criteria For Using The Equality Of Opportunity Positions

In more specific terms, the kinds of programs the League supports include:

- Programs in basic education, occupational education, and retraining when needed at any point of an individual's working career.
- Expanded opportunities in apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs.
- Child-care centers for preschool children to give parents the opportunity for employment.
- Greatly increased educational opportunity through compensatory programs for disadvantaged groups beginning at the preschool level and extending through secondary education.
- Federal financial aid to help needy students remain in high school and to take advantage of post-high school training and education.
- A regional approach to problems of economically depressed areas that cuts across state lines. This approach can be handled administratively by such means as interstate cooperation or more formal interstate compacts, or commissions made up of representatives of state and federal governments. Development programs should reflect the needs of the particular area and can include such measures as provision of education and training for available jobs, encouragement of new industry in the area, development and conservation of natural resources, and the building of public facilities.
- Programs that would inform individuals of their civil rights in education, employment, and housing, and of the opportunities open to them.
- Full use of mediation and conciliation in efforts to bring about integration of minority groups into full participation in community life.
- A federal clearinghouse for the exchange of information on solutions communities have found to problems of integration in employment, education, and housing.
- Programs to bring about effective integration of schools through federal technical assistance such as training programs and institutes for teachers and school administrators.
- Withholding federal funds from school districts that fail to meet realistic and effective guidelines and standards for school integration.
- Withholding government contracts from businesses and industries that discriminate in employment.
- An effective federal fair employment practices agency.

Education and Employment Criteria

In evaluating federal programs that have been, or will be, established to provide equality of opportunity for education and employment, the League will support those programs that largely fulfill the following criteria:

- The nationwide effort to achieve equality of opportunity in education and employment should include participation of government at all levels and encourage the participation of private institutions.
- Programs should be carefully tailored to the educational or employment needs of the people they are intended to reach.
- People for whom community action programs are designed should be involved in the planning and implementation of those programs.
- The programs should be carried out by personnel competent to meet the specific requirements of their jobs.

- Programs should assist people to become self-supporting, contributing members of society.
- The programs should be nondiscriminatory with provisions for enforcement.
- Research, pilot projects, and continuing evaluation should be encouraged and, where feasible, built into programs.
- Programs may be closely related but should avoid unnecessary duplication.
- State and local governments should contribute to the extent their resources permit; at the same time, adequate federal funds for the establishment and continuation of programs should be available if necessary.

Fair Housing Criteria

The following criteria should be applied to programs and policies to provide equal opportunity for access to housing without discrimination:

- Opportunities for purchase or renting of homes, and for borrowing money for housing should not be restricted because of discriminatory reasons such as race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.
- Responsibility in the nationwide effort to achieve equality of opportunity for access to housing resides with government at all levels and with the private sector—builders, lending institutions, realtors, labor unions, business and industry, news media, civic organizations, educational institutions, churches, and private citizens.
- The continued existence of patterns of discrimination depends on the covert support of community leaders, institutions, and residents. Award or withdrawal of federal contracts and placement of federal installations should be used as levers to change this covert support.
- After positive steps such as mediation and conciliation have been exhausted, the federal government should have the option for selective withholding of federal funds where patterns of discrimination in access to housing occur. In applying the option to withhold funds, the federal government should weigh the effects of its actions on the welfare of lower-income and minority groups.
- Federal programs should include provisions to guarantee equal opportunity for access to housing. Federal funds should not be used to perpetuate discrimination.
- In the enforcement of fair-housing laws, speedy resolution should be ensured. Administrative procedures and responsibilities should be clearly defined and widely publicized.
- Mediation and legal redress should be readily available. The process should ensure every possible protection for both complainant and persons or institutions against whom complaints are lodged. Avenues for mediation and legal redress should be widely publicized and should be easily accessible.
- Funding should be adequate to provide trained and competent staff for public education to inform citizens of the provisions of fair-housing legislation, of their fair-housing rights and of procedures to be followed in securing them. Adequate funding should also be available for mediation and for all aspects of speedy enforcement.
- There should be continued evaluation to provide a basis for revision and strengthening of all procedures so that equality of opportunity for access to housing can be accomplished.

LWVIL Action

Education

LWVIL opposes both state and federal tuition tax credits and school voucher proposals. In 1999 LWVIL filed an unsuccessful Federal Court suit to block implementation of the 1999 Tuition Tax Credit law.

Employment

Illinois Leagues have monitored Job Training Partnership Act programs. LWVIL has supported state legislation to strengthen employment protections available under federal civil rights laws. LWVIL continues to support job set-asides in government programs and strategies to move Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients into long-term employment in jobs that place them above the federal poverty line. The League opposes any reduction for education and training in the proposed TANF rules. LWVIL works with Chicago Jobs Council and Illinois Works for the Future on employment and other workforce initiatives.

LWVIL has supported an improved workforce development system that aids disadvantaged job seekers and low income workers throughout the state, including expanded educational opportunities after high school graduation.

Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action; Pay Equity

The League has supported legislation that based state employee pay scales on comparable worth and legislation strengthening civil rights at both the state and federal levels. From 1995–97, LWVIL worked with the Coalition for Equal Opportunity to protect the gains made by women and minorities in the workplace, business and education. LWVIL testified before an Illinois Senate subcommittee, supported Federal regulatory changes to strengthen enforcement, and alerted Leagues to contact targeted representatives. The League sent a letter to the Illinois House Labor Committee supporting the Equal Pay Act of 2003, which prohibits gender-based pay discrimination.

2015

The League continues to work on pay **equality for women**. According to National Women's Law Center 2014 Census Poverty Data, the poverty rate among women was 14.7% while the rate for adult men was 10.9%. The poverty rate for women 65 years and older was 12.1% compared to 7.4% for men. More than 2/3 of elderly poor are women. In addition, more than 1/2 of poor children lived in female-headed families. League continues to advocate for programs such as EITC and Child Tax Credit, improve pathways to good education and careers for all. In addition most renters need to earn \$18.78 per hour in order to pay the rent for a two bedroom apartment.

Fair Housing

Leagues have supported fair housing by monitoring anti-red-lining legislation and regulation of mortgage bankers. LWVIL monitored compliance with the 1988 Federal Fair Housing Act Amendments, which prohibit housing discrimination against the physically and mentally disabled. The League endorsed legislation in 2021 supported by the Illinois Coalition for Fair Housing including HOPE Fair Housing Center and Housing Choice Partners to amend the Homeless Prevention Act to prohibit discrimination against housing voucher holders, the disabled and others with legal sources of income in their right to apply for housing.

Equal Rights

LWVIL made a tremendous commitment to passing the Equal Right Amendment (ERA) in Illinois, including efforts to change the General Assembly's 3/5 ratification rule to a simple majority. The League has worked to bring Illinois laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA, including support of gender neutral insurance practices and re-establishing the State Commission on the Status of Women, on which members sat on various working groups.

In 2002, LWVIL again worked with an ERA Illinois coalition for ratification to the U.S. Constitution in the Illinois Legislature. The amendment passed the Illinois House in Spring 2003. Local League members extensively lobbied their senators, especially in targeted districts throughout 2003 and 2004. However, ERA passage failed in the 93rd Illinois General Assembly.

Again in 2014, LWVIL worked with an ERA coalition for ratification in the Illinois General Assembly. In 2014, the Illinois Senate ratified the ERA, but the Illinois House never had a floor vote on ERA either in the May regular session or in the November veto session. A 3/5 majority would have been required for ratification in May and in November.

In February 2017, Illinois Senator Heather Steans, as the lead Senate ERA sponsor, introduced the ERA as SJRCA0004 for ratification. It was adopted by the Illinois Senate Executive Committee, but was never scheduled for a Senate floor vote. Without a Senate vote, the ERA never came to the Illinois House for consideration.

In an attempt to move the ERA out of the Senate and into the House with a positive 3/5 majority House vote, LWVIL in 2017 worked in coalition with a number of organizations, initiated a number of TFAs and contacted key targeted legislators.

2017–2019

In 2018, the state of Illinois ratified the Equal Rights Amendment!

Specifically, in a bipartisan vote, on April 11, 2018 the IL Senate ratified ERA(SJRCA 4) and on May 30, 2018 the IL House ratified the ERA. Thus, Illinois is now the 37th state out of the required 38 states necessary for ratification. In the Senate, the vote was 43 YEAS to 12 NAYS. With a 3/5 membership majority required, the House vote was 72 YEAS to 45 NAYS resulting in passage by only two votes! LWVIL efforts for ERA ratification by Illinois was part of an active, concerted effort with other organizations working with the ERA Illinois coalition.

At the LWVUS 2018 convention in Chicago in June 2018, the Illinois delegation in coalition with other state Leagues was successful in getting the LWVUS convention to adopt a resolution stating that LWVUS would emphasize its ERA ratification support in 2018–2020.

In Congress in January 2019, both SJRes 6 and HJRes 38 to remove 1982 deadline for ERA ratification were introduced. For the first time in 36 years, there was a congressional hearing on the ERA. The US Judiciary Committee on April 30, 2019 held its two hour plus hearing to gain information on issues related to the deadline removal.

In January 2020, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, thereby complying with the constitutionally required 3/4 states ratifying the amendment.

The Archivist of the National Archives is responsible for certifying amendment ratifications and publishing ratified US Constitution amendments. As such, the Archivist properly recorded and certified ratifications from 37 states including Nevada (2017) and Illinois (2018). In January 2020, the Archivist refused to record and certify Virginia's ratification and publish the ERA as the 28th Amendment to the US Constitution.

2021

The Attorneys General of Virginia, Illinois and Nevada filed a lawsuit (*Commonwealth of Virginia, State of Illinois, and State of Nevada v. David S. Ferriero*) in the DC Circuit Court to have the Court order the Archivist to comply with what is ordinarily a pro forma ministerial ratification certification.

The DC Circuit Court judge ruled against the plaintiffs on the standing to sue issue in March 2021. The plaintiffs filed their appeal to the DC Court of Appeals in May 2021.

LWVIL is joining an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief which will emphasize that the Attorneys General of Virginia, Illinois, and Nevada have standing to sue on behalf of their residents for ERA certification by the Archivist. LWVIL is one of more than 20 organizations listed in this amicus.

Federal Role in Public Education

2012

Statement of Position on Federal Role in Public Education as announced by the National Board in March 2012:

The 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.

The League believes that the role of the federal government should include the following:

- Provide leadership and vision to promote a quality education for all children;
- Provide broad common standards developed by educational experts upon which states and local education agencies can build;
- Provide a suggested curricular structure or framework as a guide to state and local education agencies to develop their own curricula;
- Provide a national assessment that clearly informs teachers, parents, and students about how well individual students have mastered criteria established at the national level;

- Provide a national assessment that informs districts how well their populations compare to other populations similar to theirs; and
- Provide a combination of competitive grants and non-competitive funding to states and local school districts to achieve equity among states and populations.

The League of Women Voters believes that an equitable, quality public education is critical for students. While the League recognizes that there are instances where the federal government’s involvement is the only way to achieve universal change (desegregation, special needs population, gender equity), we also recognize that primary responsibility for public education resides with the states. In accordance with the League of Women Voters’ position on Equal Rights, the League continues to support equity in public education for all through:

- Broad guidelines for accountability, leaving implementation to the state and local education agencies;
- Adequate funding sources that support the broad goals of national standards; and
- Mechanisms for local and state funding with adequate federal support for mandates that require less burdensome, compliance-based reporting and regulations.

The League of Women Voters believes a basic role of the federal government in funding education should be to achieve equity among states and populations on the basis of identified needs. This should be done with full understanding that equity does not mean equal, given that some populations are more expensive to educate than others and some localities have specific needs.

The League believes that the federal government should be primarily responsible for funding any programs mandated by the federal government on local education agencies. Although the League recognizes equity in education depends on meeting basic human needs of children and of their families, the costs associated with providing equitable access to safe neighborhoods and secure housing do not belong in the education budget. Major programs of federal funding for public education (i.e., *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*) should be targeted toward children living in poverty and/or children with special needs.

The federal government has the responsibility to monitor and support access to the following:

- High quality teaching and learning, supported by quality current learning materials and well maintained educational facilities; and
- Access to health care needs (i.e., hearing, vision, dental, immunization, school-based health clinics at the secondary level, etc.) and nutritionally adequate food (i.e., school-based meals under “free and reduced meal programs”).

The League of Women Voters believes that the first five years of a child’s life are crucial in building the foundation for educational attainment and greatly impact success or failure in later life. Additionally, the League believes quality, developmentally appropriate, and voluntary early learning experiences should be available to all children, with federally funded opportunities going first to children of poverty and/or with special needs. The League believes that the federal government should support the following:

- Early childhood education programs that include funding for parent education and involve child development, health, nutrition, and access to other supportive services such as mental health care for all children and their families;
- Research that documents quality early childhood education programs; and
- Research that demonstrates the importance of linking state and local community partnerships with effective early childhood education programs and services.

Fiscal Policy

1984, 1985, 1986

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that federal fiscal policy should provide for: 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; responsible deficit policies; and a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance.

Tax Policy

LWVUS Position

LWVUS believes that the federal tax system should: be fair and equitable; provide adequate resources for government programs while allowing flexibility for financing future program changes; be understandable to the taxpayer and encourage compliance; accomplish its objectives without creating undue administrative problems.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the federal tax system, taken as a whole, should be progressive, not proportional.

The League: supports income as the major tax base for federal revenues; believes that the federal income tax should be broad-based with minimal tax preferences and a progressive rate structure; opposes a value-added tax or a national sales tax in the federal revenue system.

Further Guidelines

Under this position, the League of Women Voters would support tax measures that broaden the base and improve the equity of the income tax while working to incorporate progressivity into the tax system, taken as a whole. In evaluating specific tax preferences, the League will use the following criteria: whether the tax preference promotes equity and progressivity; whether the tax preference effectively furthers League of Women Voters program goals; whether the tax preference is the most efficient means of achieving its purpose; whether the revenue loss from the tax preference is justifiable.

Federal Deficit

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the current federal deficit should be reduced. In order to reduce the deficit, the government should rely primarily on reductions in defense spending through selective cuts and on increased revenue through a tax system that is broad-based with progressive rates. The government also should achieve whatever savings possible through improved efficiency and management. The League opposes across-the-board federal spending cuts.

The League recognizes that deficit spending is sometimes appropriate and therefore opposes a constitutionally mandated balanced budget for the federal government. The League could support deficit spending, if necessary, for stimulating the economy during recession and depression, meeting social needs in times of high unemployment, and meeting defense needs in times of national security crises. The League opposes a federal budget line-item veto.

Funding of Entitlements

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the federal government has a role in funding and providing for old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance. For such insurance programs, participation should be mandatory and coverage should be universal. Federal deficit reduction should not be achieved by reducing Social Security benefits.

LWVIL Action

In 1993, LWVIL and several local Leagues joined the newly established League of Women Voters Federal Budget Network, which evolved into the Grassroots Lobby Corps. In 2001, LWVUS and LWVIL joined the First Things First Coalition in advocating that the federal government put “first things first” and spend

revenues on necessary government programs that the League supports rather than cut taxes. The League testified at a rally on April 11, 2001 and participated in a Grassroots lobbying effort opposing the tax cuts.

Health Care

1993, 2016

LWVUS Position

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. Every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive service that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical 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 deductibles and copayments.

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.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: The League supports:

- Behavioral health as the nationally accepted term that includes both mental illness and substance use disorder.
- Access for all people to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services.
- Behavioral health care that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care.
- Early and affordable behavioral health diagnosis and treatment for children and youth from early childhood through adolescence.
- Early and appropriate diagnosis and treatment for children and adolescents that is family focused and community-based.
- Access to safe and stable housing for people with behavioral health challenges, including those who are chronically homeless.
- Effective re-entry planning and follow-up for people released from both behavioral health hospitalization and the criminal justice system.
- Problem solving or specialty courts, including mental health and drug courts, in all judicial districts to provide needed treatment and avoid inappropriate entry into the criminal justice system.
- Health education—from early childhood throughout life—that integrates all aspects of social, emotional, and physical health and wellness.
- Efforts to decrease the stigmatization of, and normalize, behavioral health problems and care.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL has supported the following legislative initiatives.

- Medical assistance for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
- Medicaid funding for prenatal care, nursing women, children under 6
- Nurse practitioners and nurse midwives to serve eligible Medicaid patients Financial incentives to increase health care workers in underserved areas
- Women have option to select an obstetrician/gynecologist as primary health care provider in managed care plans

Locally, leagues urged their counties to provide health services for the indigent, access to and information on family planning and abortion services.

LWVIL worked with the Campaign for Better Health Care (CBHC) to pass the **Health Care Justice Act** (2004), gave testimony to the Adequate Health Care Task Force at statewide hearings. The Task Force's final report with the recommendation for affordable, quality health care for all Illinois citizens was presented to the Governor and legislature in 2007. However, enabling legislation expired January 2009.

2009–2011

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) became law in March 2010 after a protracted, contentious, partisan process. LWVUS endorsed the bill to advance its position for universal access to care. LWVIL leagues advocated for the bill in coalition with the CBHC.

Consumer protection provisions of the ACA began within months, full implementation to be phased in by 2020. Americans remain divided on the law and are unsure how the law will benefit them. The health insurance requirement for all citizens is under assault in federal courts.

The Illinois Governor's Health Reform Implementation Council was created to monitor and make recommendations for state implementation of the ACA. LWVIL testified at a Council hearing citing the

pressing need for health insurance reform.

The Affordable Care Act calls on states to create a health insurance exchange by 2014. League supported SB 1729, **The Competitive Healthcare Marketplace Plan**, to set up infrastructure for a 2014 Exchange.

2011–2013

In June 2012 the Supreme Court ruled the ACA constitutional, although states were not required to expand the Medicaid provision. Furthermore, if a state does not choose to participate in expansion, the federal government cannot withdraw all Medicaid funding. In November, President Barack Obama was elected for a second term, a favorable outlook for the law. However, opposition continued: the House of Representatives voted over two dozen times to repeal the law. Polls showed that most Americans were uncertain how the ACA would affect them.

LWVIL and CBHC co-sponsored workshops for individual women and leaders of women's organizations throughout the state to speak out in support of the ACA.

Medicaid Expansion

Illinois, with 20 other states, chose to expand Medicaid coverage for those with incomes of 138% of federal poverty level or less. The ACA funds 100% of Medicaid Expansion for 2014–16, phasing down to 90% by 2020. In Illinois an estimated 500,000 more citizens would have coverage.

LWVIL lobbied in support of Medicaid Expansion. PA980104 became law in 2013.

Health Insurance Marketplace (Exchange)

ACA State Health Insurance Exchanges are online, competitive marketplaces for consumers and small businesses to compare prices and shop for health insurance. If a state does not elect to implement an Exchange by 2014, the federal government will set up and manage it. Alternatively, states may choose to pursue a partnership exchange in which the state plays a role in the development and operation of the Exchange. As of April 23, 2013, 16 states and DC will set up state based exchanges.

LWVIL worked in coalition with CBHC to ensure an Illinois Exchange is consumer-based with independent governance and free from conflict of interest. It has been a protracted process. A last minute bill supported by the insurance industry became law in 2011, supplanting model legislation LWVIL and other advocates supported.

LWVIL testified at a hearing of the Bipartisan Legislative Study Group formed by the 2011 law, to advocate for a consumer-focused bill. Information and a TFA for a coalition bill was sent to LWV membership in the veto session; no action taken.

In June 2012 a TFA requested calls to the Governor to set up a Marketplace by Executive Order. However the Governor requested a federal-state partnership Marketplace for 2014, transitioning to a state based Marketplace in 2015. Enabling legislation, needed for the transition, was filed in the 2013 session. HB3227, supported by LWVIL, passed the Senate, but not called in the House despite indications of more than sufficient votes to pass.

2013–2015

Affordable Care Act (ACA) Open Enrollment Health Insurance Marketplace

Initial October 2013 enrollment on Healthcare.gov, the federal website, was disastrous; technical issues were resolved by an industry team by year-end. Year two enrollment was greatly improved.

Second Enrollment Status @ 2/15/15:

Nationwide: 11.4 million signed up, renewed plans

Illinois: 347,300 enrolled in private plans, 78% eligible for subsidy, averaging \$210/month
575,000 enrolled in Medicaid, surpassing estimates

ACA Provisions in effect: Grand Total 20 million gain coverage nationwide including marketplaces, young adults through parents' plans, direct purchases through

insurers, adults and children enrolled in Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program. Consumer protections, as coverage of pre-existing conditions, enhanced preventive and women’s health care.

ACA Legal Issues

In *King v. Burwell* LWVUS joined an amicus brief heard by the Supreme Court March 2015. The case challenged whether tax credit subsidies can be provided to applicants for health insurance through federally facilitated health exchanges or just to those using an exchange established directly by a state. If the Court blocked subsidies to states using the federal exchange, Illinois and 36 other states would have been impacted. On June 25 SCOTUS ruled 6-3 for tax subsidies to continue through both federal and state exchanges. Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the majority, “Congress passed the ACA to improve health insurance markets, not to destroy them.”

State Health Insurance Exchange (Marketplace) last ditch efforts to pass a bill for a state exchange failed in the 2014 veto session. With that, Illinois missed the application deadline for federal set up funds of \$300–500 million.

2015 House Resolution 253 Protect Illinois Medicaid

Illinois joined Health Care coalition partners in support of resolution in response to Governor’s proposed \$1.5 billion cut to Medicaid.

LWVIL Support for Navigators

Witness slips were submitted in opposition to several bills that would have derailed the Navigator Program. Despite clear federal policies on all aspects of hiring, training and supervision of Navigators in the Illinois Partnership Marketplace, the bills set out redundant and expensive provisions designed to negatively impact 2015 enrollment. All bills remain in Rules.

For information on Public Policy and LWVIL actions on Reproductive Choices, including Affordable Care Act provisions, see LWVUS Citizen Rights positions.

2015–17

President Trump and Congressional Republicans vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2017 as a first order of business.

The Urban Institute reported repeal of the ACA would mean an estimated 1.2 million people in Illinois would lose health insurance by 2019. Illinois has 3 million on Medicaid including 700,000 on ACA Expanded Medicaid covering disabled, seniors, low-income adults and families with children, rural and children’s hospitals. The prospect of changes to Medicaid structure, as block grants, would put Illinois in a precarious position given the dire financial status. Moderate-income families in the ACA Marketplace would risk losing cost sharing subsidies, an average deduction of 61%.

2017 Bills to Repeal ACA

Countless efforts tried unsuccessfully to repeal the ACA. The American Health Care Act only passed the House in April. It would have resulted in an estimated 24 million people eventually losing coverage, including those with pre-existing conditions. A Senate bill in July lost with three opposing Republican votes, including Senator McCain’s. A final effort by Senators Graham and Cassidy failed to come to a vote in September.

League Activity 2017

LWVIL joined Protect Our Care Illinois (PoCIL), a Coalition of advocacy and social service groups to lobby for “no repeal of ACA without adequate replacement.” Letters were sent to Leagues in Congressional Districts with representatives supporting repeal. Members were asked to engage with them during the February recess through personal meetings, rallies and social media.

Leagues organized Q and A Public Forums in the 14th District (Hultgren) and 16th (Kinzinger), two of seven IL representatives who supported straight repeal of the ACA. Rep. Roskam (6th District) refused to participate in a public meeting organized by Leagues in his District.

TFA: Contact targeted U.S. Representatives to commit to a bill that is an acceptable and genuine replacement for ACA. Also call Governor Rauner asking him to reinforce with IL Congressional Delegation the dire effects that a repeal without adequate replacement would have on Illinois financial status.

TFA: Contact Governor to send a strong message to members of U.S. Congress, particularly the Illinois delegation, to refrain from voting for cuts to Medicaid benefits.

Leaders Update: Advocacy information and strategies for local league on potential Senate bill.

Testimony: House Appropriations Human Services Committee
Margaret O'Hara, LWVIL Health Care Issue Specialist, testified on a panel of nurses in support of HR 445 opposing the American Health Care Act. She cited experience with the financial devastation and lack of appropriate care suffered by patients with preexisting conditions and inadequate insurance. The panel called out the Governor

TFA: Contact Governor Rauner to publicly oppose cuts to Medicaid in any legislation to repeal, replace or modify ACA.

Sign on to organizational letter to Governor to oppose ACA repeal.

Drive For Our Lives national bus tour stop in Chicago for Press Conference and Rally by Health Coalition partners.

TFA: Contact Governor to oppose Graham-Cassidy proposal.

Sign on to organizational letter to Illinois Congressional Delegation to renew CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) that covers 325,000 IL children; expires 9/30.

Sign on to letter to Illinois Congressional Delegation to renew CHIP and Maternal Infant Home Visiting Program; added to Facebook and Twitter.

Sign on to letter to Medicare and Medical Services opposing ACA healthcare.gov weekend shutdowns for maintenance and shortened enrollment period.

2018 - 2019

The Affordable Care Act

Enrollment in ACA Exchanges for 2018 was down just 3.7%” despite uncertainty generated by President’s executive orders to cut subsidies, shorter enrollment periods, and decreased marketing. By 2018 midterm election citizen support rose for ACA provisions, especially coverage for pre-existing conditions and States’ Medicaid Expansion initiatives

In December 2018, a Federal Court in Texas ruled the Affordable Care Act (ACA) unconstitutional. The law remains in effect as the ruling is challenged. On July 9th, the Fifth Circuit Court of appeals heard oral arguments in the case.

If ACA is struck down the Kaiser Family Foundation maintains that nearly all Americans would be affected in some way. Along with Marketplace coverage, the law also covers employer-provided plans, Medicaid, and Medicare drug plans.

Because of efforts by the Trump administration, such as eliminating the Individual Mandate, obtaining adequate healthcare in Illinois is a struggle.

Illinois Medicaid services have been curtailed by a backlog of applications for the over 3 million citizens who rely on Medicaid. Almost half of recipients are dropped every year because of system glitches with renewal for eligibility

Child and Maternal Health: Childhood Lead Poisoning, Pre-Exposure HIV treatment of vulnerable teens, and Infant and Maternal Mortality among African Americans

Successful LWVIL advocacy (These became laws):

- CHIP Children’s Health Insurance Program: refunded through fiscal year 2023!
- Stock Asthma Med in Schools,
- No Tobacco Products under 21,
- Medicaid Eligibility Reform
- Youth PrEP: Clarifies that health care providers can prescribe Pre-exposure prophylaxis to youth as allowed by FDA; helps significantly reduce the amount of new HIV cases in Illinois among youth; maintains current access to STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) testing and treatment.

Unsuccessful advocacy:

- **Do No Harm Healthcare** – The Governor vetoed
- **Short Term Limited Duration Health Insurance Act:** Provides consumer protections to this type of Health Insurance. While we supported this as a stand-alone bill, we withdrew our support when this provision was mixed with others which were not aligned with our positions. That “sausage bill” became law.
- **Generic Drug Pricing Fairness Bill**
- **Child access to lead prevention service.** Would have amended the **Early Interventions Act** to ensure that young children have access to critical services and support that can prevent lead-induced cognitive delay.

2020–21

Affordable Care Act

The Supreme Court voted 7 to 2 in June 2021 to dismiss the third high court challenge, leaving the law intact. The American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Biden, initiated a special Feb. 15 to Aug. 15 ACA enrollment period, signing up nearly 2 million by mid-July.

Healthcare Affordability

A survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found the cost of prescription drugs a top concern. U.S. residents pay twice as much as economically comparable countries. Illinois, and other states, are looking to state legislation for drug affordability. 2021 session bills addressing affordability were opposed mainly by insurance companies.

Health Disparities

The COVID-19 Pandemic put a disproportionate burden of morbidity and mortality on Black and Brown communities in IL. Existing disparities were exacerbated as many were more likely to be frontline workers with high exposure to infection.

Low-income non-citizen Immigrant seniors are at increased risk without insurance. Vaccinations lagged behind residents in more affluent zip codes.

The Black Caucus Healthcare Pillar (Omnibus HB158 **PA102-0004**) addressed many of these disparities including telehealth, Doula services, and working to make Illinois the first state in the nation to offer healthcare access to undocumented seniors. Other provisions to Expand Healthcare Access and Equity: conduct racial equity impact statement for all future hospital closure applications, increased payment rates for psychiatric treatment at hospitals serving primarily low-income patients.

2020

(Bills failed to advance when GA did not meet due to COVID.)

Supported Prescription Drug Affordability Act to establish Drug Affordability Board Emergency Rules for Expansion Healthcare Low-Income Immigrant Seniors.

Signed on to Letter from Protect Our Care Illinois: Ensure all COVID-19 treatment is covered with no out of pocket costs to the consumer.

Signed on in support of Healthcare and Family Services grant to conduct needs assessment for Substance Use Disorder.

2021

Successful advocacy – These bills were signed into law in Illinois:

- Prescription Drug Repository establishes an unused drug distribution program, prioritizes low income uninsured. Prevents disposal in waterways.
- Medicaid coverage for non-citizens 55 and over.
- Hospital Financial Accountability to address health equity, reduce health disparities.

Successful national advocacy:

Biden Administration changed postpartum Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver coverage from 30 days to one year.

(For information on Public Policy and LWVIL actions on Reproductive Choices, including Affordable Care Act provisions, see LWVUS Citizen Rights positions.)

Immigration

2008

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the United States.

To complement these goals the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status

The League supports federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

Criteria for Legal Admission to the United States

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- Family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens;
- Flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries;
- Economic, business, and employment needs in the United States;
- Education and training needs of the United States;
- Educational program opportunities; and
- Lack of a history of serious criminal activity.

Administration and Enforcement

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment.

The League supports:

- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status;
- Verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers;
- Significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers;
- Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies;
- More effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States; and
- Increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the United States to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

Unauthorized Immigrants Already in the United States

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics, and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity.

LWVIL Activity

See the LWVIL Immigration position.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

1971, 1989

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that one of the goals of social policy in the United States should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty.

Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and access to health care.

The federal government should set minimum, uniform standards and guidelines for social welfare programs and should bear primary responsibility for financing programs designed to help meet the basic needs of individuals and families. State and local governments, as well as the private sector, should have a secondary role in financing food, housing, and health care programs. Income assistance programs should be financed primarily by the federal government with state governments assuming secondary responsibility.

Preventing and Reducing Poverty

In order to prevent or reduce poverty, LWVUS supports policies and programs designed to: increase job opportunities; increase access to health insurance; provide support services such as childcare and transportation; provide opportunities and/or incentives for basic or remedial education and job training; decrease teen pregnancy; ensure that noncustodial parents contribute to the support of their children.

Access to Health Care

LWVUS believes that access to health care includes the following: preventive care, primary care, maternal and child health care, emergency care, catastrophic care, nursing home care, and mental health care as well as access to substance abuse programs, health and sex education programs, and nutrition programs.

Access to Transportation

LWVUS believes that energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and will continue to examine transportation policies in light of these goals.

Housing Supply

LWVUS supports policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

FURTHER GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA

Criteria for Income Assistance

- Eligibility of all low-income individuals for assistance should be based on need. Eligibility should be established through simplified procedures such as a declaration of need, spot-checked in a manner similar to that used in checking the validity of income tax returns.
- Benefit levels should be sufficient enough to provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing, and shelter. Minimum income standards should be adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living and should be revised periodically to take into account changes in the purchasing value of the dollar. Until a federal welfare program achieves an adequate level of benefits, some states will need to supplement federal payments.
- There should be increasing emphasis on cash assistance, but in-kind assistance (e.g., food stamps, housing subsidies, medical aid) should be continued to help assure that these needs are met.
- Under a revised program, participants should not have their benefits reduced.
- Privacy of participants should be protected. All administrative procedures should be conducted with respect for the rights and dignity of the individuals.
- Work should be encouraged: participants' total income should increase as earnings increase. Counseling, realistic training for actual jobs, and financial incentives should be the links between job programs and income assistance.

Criteria for Supportive Services

Supportive services should be available—but not compulsory—for participants in income assistance programs. Most important among these are childcare, counseling, transportation, family planning, health care, and legal services.

- Fees for supportive services should be based on ability to pay and be free where necessary.
- Facilities and services for participants should be the same as for the general public.
- The federal government should exert leadership in setting standards for eligibility, for the quality of services and for adequate funding.
- Participants in the programs should be included in program development and implementation, and the administration of social services programs should be responsive to the needs of the people being served.
- Wherever possible, these services should be conveniently located in the neighborhood.
- Transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and should also provide energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation.

Government programs that require recipients of assistance to engage in work-related programs would be acceptable only if the following protections are guaranteed to the participants:

- job training;
- basic education;

- exemptions for primary care givers;
- supplemental support services such as child care and transportation;
- equitable compensation to ensure that program participants earn the same wages and benefits as other employees performing similar work;
- a disregard of some earned income for purposes of calculating benefit levels.

Criteria for Housing Supply

The following considerations can be applied to programs and policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family:

- The responsibility for achieving national housing goals rests primarily with the federal government, which should:
 - assure that our economic system is functioning to produce and maintain sufficient decent housing for citizens at all income levels;
 - compensate for any failure or inadequacy of the system by building, financing, renting, and selling homes to those citizens whose housing needs are not being met;
 - give a variety of incentives to local jurisdictions to encourage them to provide within their boundaries an adequate supply of decent housing for low- and moderate-income groups;
 - withhold federal funds from communities that fail to encourage such housing.
- State and local governments should assist by establishing effective agencies to aid, promote, coordinate, and supplement the housing programs of the federal government and the private sector.
- Government at all levels must make available sufficient funds for housing-assistance programs.
- When families or individuals cannot afford decent housing, government should provide assistance in the form of income and/or subsidized housing.
- Government programs providing subsidies to the building, financing, and insuring industries for housing for lower-income families should be evaluated in terms of units produced rather than in terms of benefits accruing to these industries.
- Government at all levels should develop policies that will assure sufficient land at reasonable cost on which to develop housing and that will assure fulfillment of other goals such as access to employment, preservation of open space, environmental cleanliness and beauty, and other aspects of a suitable living environment.
- Regional and metropolitan planning should be promoted to prevent haphazard urban growth, and housing for low- and moderate-income families should be provided as a part of all planned neighborhoods or communities.
- Lower-income families should not be segregated in large developments or neighborhoods. As their economic status improves, lower-income families should be enabled to continue to live in the same units as private tenants or as homeowners, if they are so inclined.
- Housing should be designed to meet human needs and should be built with amenities that will encourage economic integration within apartment buildings as well as within neighborhoods.
- Publicly assisted housing should be included in viable, balanced communities, with provision for quality public services and facilities, including schools, transportation, recreation, etc., that will encourage integration and stability.
- Zoning practices and procedures that will counteract racial and economic isolation should be promoted.
- State and local governments should adopt and enforce:
 - uniform building codes with standards based on performance;
 - housing codes to protect the health and safety of all citizens.
- State and local tax structures should be examined and revised to:
 - benefit communities that build housing for lower-income families;
 - encourage private owners to improve their homes;
 - reduce speculative land costs.
- Government, industry, and labor should encourage innovative building techniques to reduce the cost of housing production.
- Rights of tenants to negotiate for proper maintenance, management of facilities, and services should be protected.
- Housing programs should be administered by individuals trained for the jobs and sympathetic with the needs of their clientele.
- Citizen groups should participate in the development of publicly assisted housing programs by:

- evaluating performance;
- activating nonprofit sponsorships;
- supporting legislation;
- developing public awareness of housing discrimination and need.

LWVIL Action

Action on Housing Supply

Working with the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Housing Action Illinois, LWVIL supported legislation creating a flexible pool of funding for local communities use to prevent family homelessness. The League supported the 2021 Build Illinois Homes Tax Credit Act, which would provide income and property tax incentives to build and preserve affordable housing in Illinois. The League supports programs to prevent homeowners from losing their homes through mortgage foreclosure or due to circumstances of the COVID 19 pandemic

In conjunction with the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Housing Action Illinois and the Housing Illinois Roundtable, LWVIL supported the Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act of 2004 as well as an amendment to the Act in 2005 and the proposed amendment in 2021.

The League has worked with Housing Action Illinois in establishing affordable housing action coalitions around the State. Presently there are two such coalitions: DuPage Housing Action Coalition and Kane County Housing Action Coalition.

Illinois Leagues have worked for an increased supply of low and moderate income housing through lobbying, participating on various advisory commissions to monitor Community Development Block Grants, monitoring housing authorities and by working with zoning boards. Leagues have worked in coalitions to increase housing for the homeless.

(See LWVIL Land Use position.)

Action on Support Services

In response to a movement in Congress to eliminate or severely scale back the **federal legal services program**, LWVIL joined the Illinois Committee to Save Legal Services in the summer of 1995.

LWVIL has monitored state planning for use of federal block grants, including organizing statewide hearings. Leagues have provided support and local education on legislation relating to access to public facilities and transportation for the handicapped and published directories of facilities. LWVIL supported legislation increasing legal remedies for battered spouses, and local Leagues have been involved in establishing and funding domestic violence shelters.

Action on Transportation

LWVIL supports improved mass transportation in Illinois by calling for adequate funding and effective regional planning with such agencies as the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). LWVIL supports legislation providing up to twelve months of transitional transportation assistance to former TANF recipients no longer eligible due to increased income.

(See LWVIL Land Use position.)

Child Care

1988 (Based on positions reached from 1969–88)

LWVUS Position

LWVUS supports programs, services, and policies at all levels of government to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it, in order to increase access to employment and to prevent and reduce poverty.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL joined Voices for Illinois Children and others advocating for legislation to increase families' options for childcare. The League supports childcare subsidies to income eligible, but non-TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) families. LWVIL has supported initiatives which enhance the quality of child care, as well as legislation to increase the supply of child care providers and to require state agencies to offer flexible work schedules in order to reduce employees' child care needs. Local Leagues have worked for an increased supply of childcare by producing local directories, surveying their communities and working for after-school day care programs

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

1994

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential. The League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children. These include:

- Child abuse/neglect prevention;
- Teen pregnancy prevention;
- Quality health care, including nutrition and prenatal care;
- Early childhood education;
- Developmental services, emphasizing children ages 0–3;
- Family support services; and
- Violence prevention.

Background

From 1991–1999, state and local Leagues ran an action campaign to promote public understanding of the importance of early intervention for children at risk, encompassing national and state positions on poverty, income assistance, access to health care, education and child care, and improved services and funding of Illinois agencies serving children. LWVIL spearheaded the successful campaign to make early intervention for children at risk a LWVUS Issue for Emphasis for the 1994–96 biennium, and the Illinois delegation to the LWVUS 1994 Convention was instrumental in the adoption of the LWVUS' new Early Intervention for Children at Risk position.

The 1995 LWVIL Convention extended the state League's support for children at risk issues by adopting the Breaking the Cycle of Violence in the Lives of Children action focus. A statewide committee was formed and worked throughout the biennium to produce an educational and action guide for use by local Leagues. This action focus was extended for the 1997–99 biennium.

LWVIL Action

The League has advocated for Start Early programs in early education, Healthy Families Illinois and health care coverage of uninsured children.

At the Congressional level, LWVIL urged that the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Violent Youth Crime Act of 1996, and Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act of 1997 include prevention and early intervention provisions as strategies against crime (see LWVIL Criminal Justice position).

LWVIL participated in advocacy initiatives of Voices for Illinois Children through Voices Leadership Committee, an effort to organize action by Senatorial districts throughout Illinois. These initiatives include early childhood education, childcare, intervention for young children with developmental delays or disabilities, home visiting programs for at-risk families, mental health supports, health insurance and after school programs.

The League also worked in coalition with Action for Children, Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, Ounce of Prevention and Early Learning Illinois.

LWVIL continues to work with statewide policy organizations to expand budgetary support for initiatives to meet the needs of children at risk and their families.

(See LWVIL Children’s Services and Mental Health positions.)

Violence Prevention

1994

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports violence prevention programs in all communities and action to support:

- Public and private development and coordination of programs that emphasize the primary prevention of violence;
- The active role of government and social institutions in preventing violent behavior; and
- The allocation of public monies in government programs to prevent violence.

Gun Policy

1990, 1994, 1998

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education, and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.

The League supports a ban on “Saturday night specials,” enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.

LWVIL Action

LWVIL spearheaded the successful campaign to adopt a national gun control position on the floor of the 1990 LWVUS Convention. Illinois League members have continued their lobbying efforts to strengthen both national and state laws. See LWVIL Gun Violence Prevention position.

Urban Policy

1979, 1989

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that it is in the national interest to promote the well-being of America's cities.

Sharply targeted federal assistance to distressed cities should be central to this policy. The federal government should give highest priority in urban policy to measures that enhance the economic base of cities. The League also favors supplementary federal aid for cities in distressed fiscal condition and grants for program areas as strategies to counter the problems of hardship cities.

The fiscal health of cities depends on the active cooperation of all levels of government. The federal government should provide incentives to encourage states to take an active role in promoting the fiscal viability of their cities.

The League is committed to an urban environment beneficial to life and to resource management in the public interest.

Further Guidelines

Economic Development Assistance

The cornerstone of a national urban policy is a commitment to helping cities achieve economic strength. Federal programs to encourage private reinvestment in central cities should counter an eroding tax base and provide jobs for the inner-city unemployed. Therefore, the League supports the following federal strategies:

- Target community development programs to cities most in need.
- Encourage businesses to locate or expand in distressed cities through such financial incentives as investment tax credits, loan guarantees, subsidies for hiring the long-term unemployed and interest subsidies.
- Expand middle-income housing while not diminishing attention to low-income housing needs.
- Target federal purchasing and location of federal facilities in distressed cities.

General Financial Assistance

- The League supports a variety of federal strategies, including direct general assistance, targeted to distressed cities. Such a program should include aid to counter recession. In providing federal aid for particular program areas, grants offer city governments the best opportunities to meet local needs.
- In order to increase the availability of funds to city governments for capital expenditures, the federal government should use mechanisms to lower the cost of borrowing.
- Aid to cities should include technical assistance to improve management capacity.

LWVIL Action

Advocacy and action in all of the areas of Social Policy and on federal and state fiscal issues, represent a significant commitment to improve the quality of life in Illinois cities.

Death Penalty

2006

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports the abolition of the death penalty.

Background

In 2003–2004, LWVIL conducted a nation-wide campaign to bring a concurrence with the Illinois position to the floor of the 2004 LWVUS Convention where it fell short of the 2/3 vote needed for adoption. In 2006, LWVIL brought the issue back to Convention where concurrence was adopted by a wide margin.

(See LWWIL position, Abolition of the Death Penalty.)

Sentencing Policy

2012

LWVUS Position

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

Human Trafficking

2014

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters opposes all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. We consider human trafficking to be a form of modern-day slavery and believe that every measure should be taken and every effort should be made through legislation and changes in public policy to prevent human trafficking. Prosecution and penalization of traffickers and abusers should be established, and existing laws should be strictly enforced. Extensive essential services for victims should be applied where needed. Education and awareness programs on human trafficking should be established in our communities and in our schools.

LWVIL Positions: Social Policy

Children's Services

1967, 1972, 1977, revised 1996

LWVIL Position

The League believes that the State should play the leading role in meeting the needs of children and their families. This responsibility applies across systems of care regardless of age or legal status of the children.

Resources

The League supports a continuum of quality services that strengthens and preserves families and fosters healthy growth and development of children.

Family-focused, community-based systems of care that emphasize prevention and early intervention should have high priority. The supply of affordable, quality child care should be expanded, with priority given to those in greatest economic need. For children whose needs cannot be met at home, foster homes, group homes, small residential treatment and correctional facilities should be available. Transitional and aftercare programs are essential parts of the continuum of care. Regardless of where children are being served, education is essential.

Shelter care and other services suited to their needs should be available to children whose cases are pending. Detention should be reserved for delinquent children who meet professional screening criteria and provided separately from adult programs.

The League supports a juvenile court system that provides opportunities for effective protection, treatment and rehabilitation; meets the individual needs of children and their families; and protects the rights of all affected parties. The court's effectiveness depends on several factors: judicial leadership, personnel with

special training in juvenile matters, support services that allow judges to make informed decisions, probation services responsive to the special needs of children, courtroom procedures that reduce unnecessary delays, a wide range of available interventions, and an effective citizen presence. The League opposes the automatic transfer of children to the criminal court and believes that a juvenile court judge should determine whether a case is considered in the juvenile court or the criminal court. The League opposes the death penalty for offenses committed by children.

Administration

The State should have the primary role in funding to ensure that quality services are equitably available to children and families throughout the state. In order to protect funding and visibility, the child welfare agency should be separate from other human service agencies. The Governor's office should provide leadership to ensure that state agencies do the following:

- Communicate and cooperate with each other to provide coordinated services, clear guidelines for responsibility and information to the public about the availability of services;
- Develop long range plans which include coordination of local service delivery, provide for citizen input and review, and encourage local initiatives;
- Establish family-focused, community-based systems of care;
- Set and enforce program and personnel standards consistent with national accreditation standards;
- Encourage the recruitment, retention and training of sufficient numbers of qualified staff at all levels;
- Ensure that agencies are directed and staffed by qualified personnel regardless of political affiliation; and
- Evaluate programs and search for new methods to improve services.

Background

The current position was approved at Interim Council in 1996 and ratified by local Leagues following review by a statewide committee. It rewords the 1977 position, incorporates recommendations of the Illinois Juvenile Court Watching Project, and adds a statement opposing the death penalty for children.

From its inception, the League worked on reform issues relating to maternal and infant care, mothers' pensions and child labor.

1963

LWVIL studied the structure and financing of Illinois welfare services to children and their families, including:

- the child in need of financial assistance;
- the child in need of protection; and
- the child and the courts.

The timing enabled the League to take action not only on Aid to Families with Dependent Children, but to shape the modernization of the Juvenile Court Act, the first laws on child abuse, the newly created Department of Children and Family Services, and to lay the groundwork for the Illinois Youth Commission to become part of a code department.

1969

LWVIL studied day care.

1971

LWVIL board decided that it would be more appropriate to take action on behalf of the child in need of financial assistance under the LWVUS income assistance position adopted that year.

1975

LWVIL began to study the level of services of state agencies serving children.

1977

The study resulted in a new position that pulled together a reaffirmation of state positions, concurrence with LWV of Cook County positions, and new consensus on administration.

1979

LWVIL received a grant to develop a statewide juvenile court watching project.

LWVIL Action

The League joined as an amicus in *Artist M* (addressing the rights of children under the Federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980) and *White/Lawrence v People* (challenging a law having a disproportionate effect on minority youth). Monitored the *B H v McDonald* consent decree (a class action suit to improve services to children under the care of DCFS). Opposed an attempt to amend the Illinois Constitution in a way that would weaken laws that protect children.

2019

KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK of the Annie E. Casey Foundation information is followed closely by LWVIL.

Juvenile Justice

The League

- Celebrated the 1999 centennial celebration of the juvenile court. Julia Lathrop, second president of LWVIL, was one of its founders.
- Spearheaded legislation authorizing **Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)** to advocate in court on behalf of the child.
- Promoted **family preservation** by encouraging an array of prevention and intervention services that strengthen families rather than rely on foster and residential care.
- Urged Congress to reauthorize and fund the **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act**.
- Took an active role in rewriting the **Juvenile Court Act of 1987**. A major effort to refine the **Juvenile Justice Reform Provisions** was followed by featuring state Senator Barack Obama at the LWVIL legislative briefing in 1998.
- Strengthened the **rights of minors** by working to raise the age of original juvenile court jurisdiction, protect the confidentiality of records and require legal counsel during interrogation by law enforcement.
- Supported measures that call for an **individual review by the juvenile court** before transferring a case to the criminal court or applying provisions of the Sex Offender Registration Act. Continued to oppose automatic transfer.
- Encouraged the development of alternatives to **detention**; opposed detention of non-delinquent children; opposed detention of juveniles in adult facilities; and participated in efforts to revise the County Juvenile Detention Standards.
- Advocated for the creation and expansion of **Redeploy Illinois**, a program that enables counties to develop community-based sanctions and services for juvenile offenders who would otherwise be incarcerated.
- Supported the **Interstate Compact for Juveniles**, a measure to regulate the movement of juvenile offenders received from, or sent to, other states.
- Acted to **separate the Juvenile Division from the Department of Corrections**. Joined with others on the Governor's Transition Team to develop recommendations for the Department of Juvenile Justice. Attempted to provide juvenile offenders with protections and benefits available to non-offenders.

The League is a member of the Juvenile Reentry Workgroup and the Detention Standards Task Force Steering Committee. The League monitors meetings of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission.

Before 2009, the League

- Opposed an attempt to amend the Illinois Constitution in a way that would weaken laws that protect children.
- Celebrated the 1999 centennial celebration of the juvenile court. Julia Lathrop, second president of LWVIL, was one of its founders.
- Spearheaded legislation authorizing **Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)** to advocate in court on behalf of the child. The first CASA program established in Illinois, CASA of Cook County, began in 1986.
- Took an active role in rewriting the **Juvenile Court Act of 1987**.

- Strengthened the **rights of minors** by working to raise the age of original juvenile court jurisdiction, protect the confidentiality of records and require legal counsel during interrogation by law enforcement.
- Supported measures that call for an **individual review by the juvenile court** before transferring a case to the criminal court or applying provisions of the Sex Offender Registration Act. Continued to oppose automatic transfer.
- Encouraged the development of alternatives to **detention**; opposed detention of non-delinquent children; opposed detention of juveniles in adult facilities; and participated in efforts to revise the County Juvenile Detention Standards.
- Advocated for the creation (in 2004) and subsequent expansion of **Redeploy Illinois**, a program that enables counties to develop community-based sanctions and services for juvenile offenders who would otherwise be incarcerated.
- Acted to **separate the Juvenile Division from the Department of Corrections** and create the Department of Juvenile Justice in 2006.

2009-2011

LWVIL testified in support of retaining the **independence of the Department of Juvenile Justice** in response to the Governor's executive order calling for a study of a merger between the DJJ and the Department of Children and Family Services.

Attended the 100th birthday celebration of the **Institute for Juvenile Research**, the first child guidance clinic in the country. The IJR grew out of the leadership of Julia Lathrop, second president of LWVIL and co-founder of the Juvenile Court Act.

Supported SB 2725 [PA 95-1031], a measure that treats **17 year olds as misdemeanants instead of felons**.

Supported SB 1013 [PA 95-1050] making **Redeploy Illinois** a permanent program.

Sent written testimony to the committee on SB 1725 **opposing the setting of six-month maximum terms for parole**. SB 1725 [PA96-0853]. was amended in GA and, following the acceptance of an amendatory veto, was adopted.

2011-2013

A TFA was sent, supporting HB 2404 (PA 98-0061) Youths under 18 who commit non-violent felonies will be tried in juvenile court not adult court.

2013-2015

LWVIL is one of approximately 200 organizations making up the membership of The Responsible Budget Coalition which is "concerned with the state budget and tax issues. It includes organizations that serve children, families, veterans, seniors and people with disabilities, education groups, early learning, K-12 and higher education, labor unions, faith based and civic organizations and many others".

LWVIL has worked throughout the state with legislative district visits as well as participating in rallies at State offices in Springfield and Chicago especially. There also has been considerable media coverage throughout the State. We have continued advocating with RBC for the three principles of RBC re the state's budget:

1. Adequate revenue to support state priorities and make smart investments
2. No more cuts to vital programs and services
3. Fairness in raising revenue and making any cuts cause by failure to raise adequate revenue

The needs of many individuals and families here in Illinois and around the Country continue to be immense. Housing that is affordable, child care help, income assistance and employment opportunities along with help in domestic violence issues and disability issues as well as available public transportation are among the greatest advocacy efforts of the League. With the Illinois budget/fiscal problems and the passing of the 2016 budget by the State legislature being incomplete, we have seen unusually difficult situations for the providers around the State including needing to reduce the services and releasing workers from their jobs even as the need rises.

Juvenile Justice

Redeploy Illinois' budget was doubled in FY 2015 due to its success in diverting offenders from incarceration. Two juvenile prisons were closed in 2013; six remain open. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled in

March, 2014, that inmates serving mandatory life sentences for murders committed as juveniles will receive new sentencing hearings, giving about 80 inmates the opportunity for reduced sentences or even freedom.

PA 98-0061 (HB2404) provides that youths under 18 who commit non-violent felonies will now be tried in juvenile court. A TFA was sent supporting the bill. **PA 98-0558** expands juvenile justice system aftercare pilot program, promoting a more rehabilitative approach to juvenile justice reentry. **PA99-0258** ends automatic transfer to adult court for children under 15 and expands the discretion of juvenile court judges to make the transfer decision for children ages 16 and 17. Automatic transfer for some children 16 and 17 still is in place. **PA99-0254** provides that a child under 13 cannot be detained in a detention facility unless local youth service provider is unable to accept the child. **PA99-0268** ends the incarceration of children for misdemeanors and for status offences, and requires set terms for aftercare (parole) that cannot be longer than adult parole terms.

2015–2017

These bills, passed in the balance of the 99th General Assembly and supported by the League accomplished these things: juveniles will now not be imprisoned for crimes that are not felonies or for certain non-violent felonies; mandatory probation terms have been reduced [**HB6291 (PA99-0879)**]; legal representation is required for children up to age 15 during interrogation in murder and sex offenses, videotaping of juvenile interrogations has been expanded, and a modified version of the Miranda warning is required for children [**SB2370 (PA 99-0882)**]; more expungement opportunities are available [**HB6328 (PA 99-0881)**]; the Mental Health Opportunities for Youth Diversion Task Force is created and its report to the Governor and General Assembly is due within a year of its first meeting. The task force is to identify existing diversion programs, additional funding sources, the possible barriers to the implementation of evidence-based diversion models and to suggest solutions so that youth are diverted from the juvenile justice system into appropriate health care settings [**SB0320 (PA99-0894)**].

Other Important legislation: eliminates mandatory natural life sentences for youth under 18 at the time of the offense [**HB2471 (PA99-0069)**]; places limitations on expulsions, disciplinary removals to alternative schools, and out-of-school suspensions so that, with the use of other behavioral and disciplinary interventions, children can continue their education [**Senate Bill 100 (PA99-0456)**].

In October of 2016, the Illinois Supreme Court banned the shackling of juveniles during court proceedings unless the court finds reason to do so in a separate hearing

The League supported these reform bills passed during the 100th General Assembly and signed by the Governor:

- **HB2987 (PA100-0141)** (ensures that Illinois youth who are or were homeless, in foster care, or court-involved have a chance to get the jobs and internships they are qualified for when a State agency has a job opening for an intern or student worker)
- **HB3165 (PA100-0157)** (requires that training of juvenile personnel include restorative justice courses)
- **HB3817 (PA100-0285)** (expands automatic expungement and strengthens confidentiality of juvenile records)
- **HB3903 (PA100-0204)** (does not allow a place of detention or criminal processing on school grounds)

So far, about 35 of 80 Illinois inmates who had received mandatory life-without-parole sentences for crimes committed as juveniles were resentenced since the Supreme Court ruled that punishment unconstitutional. A small number were released. Two inmates received natural life sentences in new hearings, but one of these had his punishment reduced to 60 years on appeal.

2017–2019

The Illinois Supreme Court in April, 2019, determined that a sentence over 40 years violates the 8th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution for a youth under the age of 18 when it is imposed without consideration of the defendant's "youth and attendant characteristics." The decision could affect more than 200 juveniles who are currently serving such sentences.

Persuading the General Assembly to recognize emerging adults (18-25) as a special group between juvenile and adult has been difficult even though research indicates that the juvenile brain is still maturing in the teen years and reasoning and judgment are developing well into the early to mid 20s.

An encouraging development has been the creation in August, 2017, of the first restorative justice court, which deals with non-violent offenders, aged 18-26, in the Chicago neighborhood of North Lawndale.

LWVIL successfully advocated for this legislation which was enacted during the balance of the 100th General Assembly:

- **PA100-1182** restores parole opportunities for those serving long sentences and convicted when under age of 20. Illinois now will be allowed to grant discretionary parole for the first time since the practice was abolished in 1978.

LWVIL supported with TFA and/or witness slips these bills which failed to pass in the 100th General Assembly:

- **SB1265** would have required legal counsel for juveniles under the age of 18 throughout custodial interrogation. The law now covers only juveniles under the age of 15.
- **HB3142** would have prohibited public colleges and universities from asking about or considering a record during the admission process.
- **HB4208** would have created an optional grant program for school districts that wished to reallocate funding for school-based law enforcement personnel toward restorative justice programs and related personnel such as school psychologists and social workers. (The Governor amended the bill. The GA did not accept the amendment or override it.)
- **HB4581** would have established a multi-year approach to raise the age of Juvenile Court for misdemeanors.

The League supported these bills during the 101st General Assembly that failed to pass:

- **HB1458** would have expanded restorative approaches to justice.
- **HB1468** would have raised the minimum age for detention from 10 to 13.
- **SB239** would have extended the age of juvenile court from 18 to 21.

LWVIL opposed these bills during the 100th General Assembly that failed to pass:

- **SB2339** would have presumed detention for juveniles charged with possession of a stolen motor vehicle or vehicular hijacking.
- **SB2581** would have increased the time a minor spends in temporary custody from 40 to 48 hours and allows video detention hearings. The bill would likely have increased the number of children in detention.

The Cook County Board of Commissioners adopted an ordinance to prohibit the detention of children under the age of 13. It is to be hoped that other counties will see the wisdom of forbidding the detention of young children.

2020-2021

- The April, 2020 letter from CJ Advocates referenced in the Criminal Justice Report also concerned juvenile justice populations.
- LWVIL signed on to a CJ Advocates' letter to the Governor, asking him to take emergency action to (1) release youth from IDJJ facilities in every possible case, (2) expand quarantine-friendly services (e.g. video counseling) to youth returning home, and (3) close the large IDJJ prisons.
- LWVIL signed on to a Juvenile Justice Initiative letter to Chief Judge Evans, asking him to direct the Cook County Juvenile Court to comply with his order to provide immediate review of defense motions to review detention, including review of electronic monitoring orders.
- LWVIL became an organizational supporter of the **Final 5 Campaign** which seeks to close the five remaining Illinois youth prisons within the next two years, and to reinvest in those cities and counties that send the most youth to DJJ facilities with community- directed prevention and re-entry resources. The Final 5 Campaign is a coalition of formerly incarcerated youth, families impacted by the juvenile legal system, and allies committed to closing youth prisons.

- LWVIL signed on to a letter, prepared by the Juvenile Justice Initiative, sent to the Black Caucus, suggesting items to include in the criminal justice reform legislation that became the **SAFE-T Act**: 1) Ending the pre-trial detention of children younger than 13 and limiting pre-trial detention to felony offense charges; 2) Giving lawyers to all children under age 18 during interrogation in cases that could trigger adult sentencing; 3) Providing a legal privilege for communications in restorative justice proceedings; 4) Beginning all cases of children under age 18 in juvenile court. The Black Caucus failed to address any juvenile issues.
- LWVIL signed on to a letter drafted by the Juvenile Justice Initiative asking the Chicago City Council to base its response to juveniles in police custody on the best practices established by the Miami-Dade Juvenile Assessment Center model which has become a national standard. The report of the Inspector General's audit of the Juvenile Intervention Support Center (JISC) had concluded that the JISC fails to provide the deflection from the criminal justice system it was originally designed to do.

No juvenile justice bills were adopted in 2020.

In 2021, LWVIL successfully advocated for PA102-0350 which fixes inequities caused by the Habitual and Violent Juvenile offender statute in the Juvenile Court Act in two ways:

1. Young people who are committed as Habitual or Violent Juvenile Offenders are now allowed to earn "good conduct" credits and program credits for completing evidence based programs.
2. Their target release date would be modified. The change would allow young people to earn program credits to reduce their length of stay and would also place them within the overall juvenile indeterminate framework, so that factors such as age, mental health needs, and progress could be taken into account when making release decisions.

PA102-0101 was important legislation adopted in 2021: statements made by a minor during a custodial interrogation are inadmissible in court if the law enforcement officer "knowingly engages in deception" during the interrogation.

2021-2022

Legislation supported by the League and signed into law:

- **HB3513 (PA102-0350)** allows young people committed as Habitual or Violent Juvenile Offenders to earn program credits to reduce their length of stay and places them within the overall juvenile indeterminate framework, so that factors such as age, mental health needs, and progress could be taken into account when making release decisions.

Other important legislation included:

- **HB 1064 (PA102-1128)** provides that a person who was under the age of 21 convicted of aggravated criminal sexual assault and most forms of first-degree murder could ask for parole after 20 years. They could also seek review once more after another 10 years. Youth with natural life sentences could seek review after 40 years. The Act is not retroactive. (In 2019, Illinois provided parole review for young people convicted for lesser crimes.)
- **HB5016 (PA102-0966)** enables youth in custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections to participate in remote learning in order to complete high school and further their education.
- **SB2122 (PA102-0101)** provides that a confession made by a minor under the age of 18 during a custodial interrogation is inadmissible if the law enforcement officer "knowingly engages in deception" during the custodial interrogation

2022-2023

A 2023 Issues Briefing Breakout Session featured Heidi Mueller, Director of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Department and Elizabeth Clarke, founder of Juvenile Justice Initiative.

Legislation supported by the League and awaiting Governor's signature:

- **HB 3140 (PA103-0178)** prohibits solitary confinement except as a **temporary** response to a juvenile's behavior that poses a serious threat.
- **HB 3414 (PA103-0191)** provides important mitigating factors for judges to consider when sentencing serious cases involving juveniles who are also victims of trafficking and sex crimes. The

bill allows judges to depart from sentencing guidelines, including mandatory minimums, or to transfer a minor offender to juvenile court for sentencing.

- **SB 2197** expands the jurisdiction of the Office of the Independent Juvenile Ombudsman (co-aligned with the Department of Juvenile Justice) to include county-operated juvenile detention centers.

LWVIL will continue to support legislation that will:

- begin all juvenile cases in juvenile court with automatic transfer to adult court
- require the assistance of a lawyer during custodial interrogation for all children (currently only those under age of 13)
- create a minimum age of 14 for criminal responsibility in accordance with the standards set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This would forbid detention in county jails and juvenile prisons until the age of 14.
- limit detention to a last resort for serious offenses
- include emerging adults (ages 18 to 25) in a developmentally appropriate justice system

(See LWVIL Mental Health position and LWVIL Income Assistance positions as well as LWVUS Social Policy - Child Care and Early Intervention for Children at Risk positions.)

Criminal Justice

1972, 1973, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1989, revised 1995, 2021

LWVIL Position

The League has positions on the following aspects of criminal justice.

Investing In Communities To Reduce Crime And Violence

To reduce crime and violence, there should be community-supported and comprehensive investment in underserved and/or impoverished communities.

Bias In The Criminal Justice System

In order to work toward the goal of equal treatment under the law, ongoing evidence-based training for individuals working in the criminal justice system is necessary to check biased behavior.

Equitable And Appropriate Treatment Of People In The Criminal Justice System

In order to assure equitable and appropriate treatment of people, the criminal justice system needs to consider their gender, age, health, race, ethnicity, disabilities, and cognitive development.

Data Collection And Transparency

Efficient data collection, analysis, data sharing among appropriate agencies, and transparency are critical in an impartial and unbiased criminal justice system.

Policing

Policing should protect and promote the dignity of all. Building trust and nurturing legitimacy on both sides of the police/citizen divide is foundational to positive relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Police recruits should be hired based on their ability and willingness to build positive relationships with diverse members of the community.

Law enforcement agencies should work with community organizations (e.g. schools, social services, churches, and businesses) to develop policies and strategies to reduce crime and promote public safety. It is desirable for police to use alternatives to arrest whenever possible.

Law enforcement should adopt model policies and best practices for current technology-based community engagement that increases community trust and access.

Quality training and education should begin with recruits and should be ongoing throughout officers' careers. Police should be licensed.

The mental and physical health and safety of law enforcement officers is critical not only for the officers, their colleagues, and their agencies but also for public safety.

Jail Standards

The League supports the development and enforcement of standards for local jails and detention facilities. The Illinois Department of Corrections is an appropriate agency to carry out this function.

Pre-Trial Procedures

The League supports the elimination of cash bond. Post-arrest detention should only be considered if the defendant is a danger to the community or is a flight risk. When deciding conditions of pretrial release for a defendant, the judge should consider the results of an unbiased risk assessment.

Electronic monitoring may be used if it does not prohibit a defendant from carrying out responsibilities such as working, attending school, seeking medical help, or meeting family needs. Pre-trial service providers should remind defendants of court appearances. A private attorney or public defender should be present for all defendants at all hearings.

Courtroom Procedures and Access

The League supports improvements in courtroom procedures that serve to minimize confusion and delay and increase fairness and efficiency. Trials should be prompt, with a limit on the time the accused can be held in jail prior to trial. Sufficient numbers of well-paid and well-trained judges, assistant state's attorneys, public defenders and other court personnel are essential. Uniform standards should be used for appointing public defenders. Barriers to and within the courthouse and courtrooms should be eliminated whenever possible.

Sentencing Laws and Procedures

- The League believes that judges should retain the discretion to choose between imprisonment and probation for most offenses and opposes the proliferation of non probationable offenses.
- The League believes that there should be strict penalties and enforcement for all crimes committed with a handgun or an assault weapon (see LWVIL Gun Violence Prevention position).
- The League supports reduction in time served as an incentive for good conduct by those who are incarcerated. Such credits should be incorporated into the sentencing structure and should not be revoked without due process.
- The League believes that a body, free from political influence, should make recommendations that promote certainty and fairness in sentencing in order to provide greater uniformity and monitor the fiscal impact and effect on prison populations.
- Evidence-based practices and best practices should guide sentencing laws and prosecutorial decision-making.
- Proposed sentencing laws should be evaluated for potential discrimination.
- There should be collaboration among stakeholders so that sentencing outcomes are just and fair.
- Legislation that reduces penalties for a crime should allow those incarcerated under the previous law a process to seek resentencing.

Alternatives to Incarceration

The League supports the expansion of prevention and treatment programs to ease the burden on the criminal justice system. The League supports the concept of pretrial diversion. The League supports approaches such as restorative justice which involve members of the community. The League supports the increased use of a range of intermediate sanctions in the community and the development of screening and supervision standards to ensure their appropriate use. The community must be educated regarding these alternatives.

The League supports a statewide probation system. Probation, the underlying element of most alternatives, must be professionally staffed and removed from political influence. Probation officers should be required to meet uniform professional standards and receive pre-service and in-service training. The number of

probation officers should be adequate to make comprehensive investigative reports to the court, supervise categorized, manageable caseloads and provide social services.

Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC)

- The League supports correctional services that conform to national professional standards. This would include people receiving humane treatment and access to healthcare while they are incarcerated.
- The League believes that people in the custody of DOC are entitled to mail, telephone calls, visits from relatives, extended family visits, furloughs, the opportunity to voice grievances, and access to information in their case records.
- The League believes that people in the custody of DOC are entitled to participate in rehabilitative, educational and job training programs which are evidence-based and/or based on best practices. These programs should be made available to all for whom they are appropriate, should be tailored to individual needs, and should be provided in conjunction with the boards of education, private industry and unions.
- All people in the custody of DOC should have access to program credits.
- Pre-release planning and transitional living centers are critical for a successful re-entry and reintegration into society. They bridge the gap between prison and the community.
- The League supports mandatory supervised release (MSR) and the provision of community services to people who have been incarcerated, particularly when first released. Technical violations of mandatory supervised release need to be carefully defined and uniformly reported. The length of MSR should be determined by completion of goals which are tailored to the individual, rather than a strict period of time. The rules for MSR should be clearly explained along with the expected consequences for any violation of rules. The League believes parole officer caseloads should be manageable so that the officers are able to provide ongoing support.

Post Incarceration and Sentence Completion: From Recidivism to Successful Re-Entry

The League believes the removal of unnecessary barriers encountered by people with criminal records would enable a successful return to society. People with criminal records should have access to the same income-based support opportunities and services that are available to others.

Citizen Involvement

The criminal justice system should make use of professionally directed volunteers who have been carefully screened and trained. The League supports citizen involvement in monitoring court proceedings and assessing the needs for improved court facilities. An independent citizen's committee should monitor Illinois correctional facilities.

Funding

The League believes that the criminal justice system must be adequately funded in order to carry out its goals.

Funding of specialized programs such as mental health services, programs for women and substance abuse treatment, is essential. The League supports funding to guarantee humane prison conditions and provide programs and services that offer the opportunity for self-improvement.

The League believes that state funds should emphasize community sanctions and treatment instead of incarceration. All program funding should be periodically evaluated to determine its effectiveness and to ensure that proper populations are being served.

Background

Delegates to the 1995 LWVIL Convention adopted by concurrence a revised position following a review by a statewide committee. The revision pulled together the following positions:

- Bail bond, pretrial release and victimless crimes (1972)
- Probation and parole; inmate rights and services (1973)
- Handgun (1976) and Assault Weapons (1989) Control
- Improved courtroom procedures based on recommendations of the Illinois Court Watching
- Project after monitoring some 82,000 criminal court proceedings (1979)
- Sentencing laws (1982)

- Alternatives to incarceration and state funding role (1983)

In 2021, all sections except for Jail Standards, and Citizen Involvement were updated. Investing in Communities, Bias, Equitable treatment, Data Collection, and Policing were added. *The 2016 Final Report of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform* and the *2015 Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* were major resources informing the study.

LWVIL Action

Prior to June 2009

The League participated in the following Governor's Task Forces: Prison Crowding; Detention Standards; Mentally Retarded/Mentally Ill Offenders; and Crime and Corrections. The League opposed an amendment to the Illinois Constitution that limits the right to bail.

2009–2011

LWVIL supported efforts to revise criminal laws and to establish the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council [PA 96-711]. The League continued to advocate for: community supervision and treatment of non-violent offenders; the creation of drug schools and mental health courts; the creation of a system of probation with state standards and funding; the establishment of an array of intermediate sanctions for probation violators; evidence based practices; legislation to prohibit shackling inmates when giving birth; specialized services that meet the needs of offenders who are mothers, substance abusers or mentally ill; educational and vocational programs to reduce recidivism; and the removal of barriers to employment for persons with criminal records.

LWVIL opposed the expansion of mandatory prison sentences and the attempts to establish chain gangs

2011–2013

TFAs were sent, supporting the following legislation which became law:

- SB 2621 (PA 97-0697) permits inmates to earn credits toward release through good conduct, completing educational and vocational programs.
- SB 3349 (PA 97-1118) diverts first time felony offenders from incarceration and allows the dismissal of felony charges upon the successful completion of a diversion program.
- HB 5771(PA 97-1113) expands the eligibility of ex-offenders to receive certificates of good conduct (certifying rehabilitation) which enhance their prospects for employment.
- HB 3061(PA 98-0142) allows more non-violent felonies to be sealed, four years after sentence is completed.
- HB 1046 (PA 98-0139) Those leaving prison are allowed to begin the process of enrolling in Medicaid in a timely fashion to ensure continuity of medical and behavioral health care upon release.
- SB 1872 (PA 98-0538) eliminates the felony enhancement for prostitution.

The 2013 Issues Briefing included a criminal justice workshop, featuring panelists from the John Howard Association, the Safer Foundation, and Applesseed Fund for Justice. Topics covered diversion programs, the closing of the Tamms (Supermax) Correctional Center on January 4 and the possible closing of Dwight Correctional Center (which was closed in March), the restoration of sentencing credits, and issues facing people with criminal records reentering society.

2013–2015

Criminal Justice reform has become a bipartisan issue: in 2014, the General Assembly created a Joint Criminal Justice Reform Committee and Governor Rauner created a Criminal Justice Reform Commission.

In 2013, TFAs were sent, supporting:

- **HB3061 (PA 98-0142)** allows more non-violent felonies to be sealed;
- **HB 1046 (PA 98-0139)** allows those leaving prison to begin the process of enrolling in Medicaid to ensure coverage once released;
- **SB 1872 (PA 98-0538)** eliminates the felony enhancement for prostitution.

In 2014, the League signed onto fact sheets and filed witness slips in support of

- **HB5701 (PA 98-0774)** “Bans the Box” so that a job applicant is not required to reveal a criminal record or criminal history until a job interview or employment has been offered;
- **HB2378 (PA 98-1009)** provides for the sealing of certain misdemeanor offenses.

Other important legislation that was signed into law:

- **PA 98-0194** expands the Medicaid program in Illinois, giving many in the criminal justice system access to medical and behavioral healthcare;
- **PA 98-0165** grants tax credits to employers hiring qualified ex-offenders;
- **PA 98-0399** expunges eligible class 3 and 4 felony convictions for veterans, honorably discharged;
- **PA 98-0547** expands the recording of homicide interrogations to more violent felonies;
- **PA 98-0164** expands first-offender pre-conviction probation with charges expunged upon successful completion;
- **PA98-1082** improves guardianship provisions so that incarcerated parents’ rights are protected and observed.

In 2015, the League submitted witness slips for:

- **HB3149 (PA99-0378)** which allows people who earn a vocational certification, GED, HS Diploma or some other degree to petition to have their eligible convictions sealed prior to the statutorily required 4 year waiting period;
- **HB3475 (PA99-0381)** expanding the eligibility for Certificates of Good Conduct to include those who have committed non-sex-related forcible felonies.

Other important legislation that was signed into law:

- **PA99-0425** creates a pilot program in Cook County to do drug analysis in the field as is done in other Illinois counties. This avoids unwarranted incarceration of innocent people.
- **PA99-0109** allows an affirmative defense to a charge of prostitution.
- **PA99-0352** is an omnibus police reform bill which could become a national model for law enforcement reform. Statewide guidelines are created for police body-worn cameras and implements policies to end stop and frisk discriminatory practices and much more.

Collaborative Activity:

These organizations, through their advocacy efforts, informative conferences, other gatherings, and communications have been essential partners: Cabrini Green Legal Aid, Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Chicago Jobs Council, the Community Renewal Society, Heartland Alliance, the Illinois Justice Project, the John Howard Association, Juvenile Justice Initiative, Northwestern Law, the Safer Foundation, the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, and Uptown Peoples Law Center.

2015-17

These bills, passed in the balance of the 99th General Assembly and supported by the League, expanded employment opportunities for returning citizens: HB4360 (PA99-0667), HB4515 (PA99-0872), HB5973 (PA99-0876), SB42 (PA99-0886), and SB3005 (PA99-0884).

The Final Report of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Report was released in January, 2017, but the General Assembly still has not addressed a number of important recommendations. Overcrowding in prisons will not significantly be reduced until sentences for more serious crime are shortened. The League supported these reform bills passed during the 100th General Assembly and signed by the Governor:

- **HB0375 (PA100-0247)** (requires probation officers to undergo Crisis Intervention Team training)
- **HB0514 (PA100-0282)** (requires immediate sealing of a record of arrest or charge if result is acquittal or dismissal)
- **HB0698 (PA100-0283)** (creates the Prisoner Entrepreneur Education Program to teach business skills and enable successful reentry into society)
- **HB2373 (PA100-0284)** (expands record sealing eligibility)
- **HB2738 (PA100-0030)** (allows video visitation in prisons to enable those in prison to maintain relationships with loved ones)

- **HB3712 (PA100-0198)** (helps men and women in prison to get access to tablets that will be used expressly to educate, hone skills, and video visit loved ones)
- **SB1688 (PA100-0286)** (improves occupational licensing opportunities by creating a licensing process that looks at license applicants' rehabilitation along with criminal history)
- **SB1781 (PA100-0287)** (extends expungement or sealing fee waiver pilot program)

The League supported this reform bill passed during the 100th General Assembly which still awaits the Governor's signature: **HB303** (reforms civil asset forfeiture law in order to protect innocent parties and to require law enforcement to report assets seized).

LWVIL and the Chicago League endorsed a report issued by The Children and Family Justice Center at the Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law entitled **Building a Safe Chicago: Calling for a Comprehensive Plan**. The Report urges leadership to reject reactionary and unproven crime fighting policies and instead attack the root causes of violence with a comprehensive crime prevention plan that will put public health first, reduce illegal handgun availability, tailor punishment to the crime, ensure police effectiveness, and invest to achieve equity in economically-disadvantaged communities. The recommendations are applicable state-wide.

At the 2017 convention, LWVIL voted to update the criminal justice position, which was last revised in 1995.

2017–2019

In October, 2017, the League signed on in support of a letter from the Cook County Public Defender to the members of the Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee to adopt a new rule to eliminate wealth-based pretrial detention.

Issues Briefing (IB) and Pre-Convention (PC) sessions presented:

- **Criminal Justice: Reforms Accomplished and Reforms Still Needed** featured a state senator, a State's Attorney, an advocate opposing cash bail, and an advocate for people with records returning to society. (2018 IB Plenary)
- **Community policing and related issues** featured two chiefs of police. (2019 IB breakout session)
- **Criminal Justice Reform: The Way Forward—Research, Legislation, and League Advocacy**, featured a researcher from Loyola University, Chicago, and an advocate from ALCU of Illinois. (2019 PC workshop)

The group, **CJ Advocates**, continues to inform LWVIL of important legislation. This group and others sponsor gatherings to explain the various criminal justice reform issues.

The Criminal Justice Position Update Committee will be presenting consensus materials for approval to the Board in early 2020 and, once approved, these will be furnished to local Leagues so that local League study committees can begin work toward consensus meetings in early 2021.

LWVIL signed on to a White Paper distributed by the Illinois Justice Project in support of legislation calling for the reclassification of simple possession of a personal use quantity of a controlled substance from a felony to a Class A Misdemeanor. This was recommended by the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform. The bill, however, failed to pass out of the House.

With the passage of a bill legalizing marijuana, over 315,000 Illinois residents (770,000 cases) are eligible now to have their cases expunged. In addition, the Act creates the Restore, Reinvest, Renew program, which will direct investments to the communities most negatively impacted by the war on drugs and will fund substance abuse treatment and prevention and mental health care.

LWVIL successfully advocated for this legislation, which was enacted during the balance of the 100th General Assembly and during the 101st General Assembly

- **PA100-0512** reforms Civil Asset Forfeiture Law to protect innocent parties and to require law enforcement to report assets seized;
- **PA100-0947** provides a lactation room in courthouses;
- **PA100-0999** expands alternatives to incarceration;
- **PA100-1025** provides deflection from arrest for substance abusers;

- **PA101-0020** bars state and local governments from contracting with private prison companies to run any kind of detention center in Illinois;
- **PA1010-0086** eliminates the \$5 medical co-pay in IDOC;
- **PA101-0176** assists people with records in obtaining health care employment;
- **PA101-0235** repeals the provision that IDOC can seek reimbursement from those incarcerated for their expenses;
- **PA101-0440** enables people in prison for serious offenses to earn time off of their sentence by completing rehabilitative programming;
- **PA101-0441** provides civics education for those returning from IDOC to society;
- **PA101-0442** allows voting in jail and gives voting information to returning citizens;
- **PA101-0471 and PA101-0480** direct judges to weigh the impact of incarceration on dependent children and provide other protections for these children

2020-21

No criminal justice legislation was adopted during 2020, when the General Assembly did not meet due to the pandemic.

- In April, 2020, LWVIL signed on to a CJ Advocates' letter to Chief Justice Anne Burke, Chief Judge Timothy Evans (Cook Co. Circuit Court), et al., detailing why, due to COVID-19, it is “imperative to consider ways to limit our jail and prison populations, including that of the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center.”
- In July, 2020, LWVIL also signed on to a letter sent to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, et al., making recommendations to address homelessness and recidivism among people released from prison due to severe residency restrictions.
- In two breakout sessions at the 2020 Issues Briefing, members of the criminal justice position update study group previewed the consensus questions.
- At the 2021 Issues Briefing, a plenary panel discussion Recognizing and Doing Something About Systemic Racism and Inequality included Sharone Mitchell from the Illinois Justice Project (later appointed Cook County Public Defender.)
- In March, 2021, the Board adopted an updated criminal justice position, which expanded LWVIL's advocacy opportunities. The LWVIL convention affirmed the Board decision in June.

PA101-0652 “the SAFE-T Act,” was passed in the lame duck session. An omnibus bill, it abolished cash bail (effective in 2022), made improvements in pre-trial procedures, and increased police accountability. LWVIL could not support the bill because many details were unknown until the time of passage and, in addition, LWVIL had no position on a number of the issues addressed.

PA102-0028, supported by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police and the Illinois State Police, amended portions of the SAFE-T Act that had been opposed by law enforcement.

LWVIL successfully advocated for this legislation:

- PA101-0623 eliminates driver's license suspension for failure to pay parking and compliance tickets
- PA102-0178 removes the eligibility restriction that bars people with drug-related felony convictions from receiving TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.)
- PA102-0494 provides that the Prisoner Review Board may grant a person committed to the Department of Corrections early release for medical incapacity or terminal illness.
- PA 102-0100 ensures confidentiality in restorative justice practices (designed for young adults, ages 18 to 26.)
- Additional legislation which may enhance our work ahead:
- PA102-0430 creates a task force to: examine the quality of legal services offered by public defenders throughout the state and make recommendations to GA and Governor.
- PA102-0099 creates a task force to study retroactive sentencing and ways to reduce Illinois's prison population.
- PA102-0102 allows State's Attorneys to petition the sentencing court to resentence an individual if the original sentence no longer advances the interests of justice.

2022-23

- After the adoption of the updated Criminal Justice position in 2021, LWVIL actively supported the SAFE-T Act and the Pretrial Fairness Act (PFA) section which abolished cash bail) by:
 - hosting a webinar for all LWVIL members and the public
 - joining the amicus brief defending the constitutionality of the PFA before the Illinois Supreme Court
 - supporting efforts of the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice of which LWVIL was a member.
- On July 18, 2023, the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the PFA. On September 18, 2023, cash bail will be officially abolished in Illinois.
- In February, 2022, LWVIL signed onto a letter which offered “Thirteen Principles for Earned Release Sentencing Reform” to the **Resentencing Task Force** which is to study innovative ways to reduce the prison population in Illinois.
- In March 2022, an Issues Briefing Breakout Session featured a panel which detailed how people who had completed their sentences continue to face over 1,000 permanent punishment laws and regulations.
- During 2022, LWVIL formally became a member of a number of coalitions which inform LWVIL advocacy: Court Transparency Coalition, Criminal Justice Advocates, Fully Free Campaign (now the Illinois Coalition to End Permanent Punishments), Illinois Blueprint for Peace, and the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice.
- LWVIL also supports the legislation of the Illinois Drug Policy Reform Coalition (HB3447 in 2022 and SB1830 in 2023) and the Elder Parole Coalition (HB3613 in 2022 and HB2045 in 2023).
- LWVIL participates in the Justice 2020 Network, a multi-year effort to bring together the diverse perspectives of individuals, organizations, and communities seeking to address the inequities of the criminal legal system.
- The Criminal Justice Google Group has 78 members: it is sent reports, notices of events, and requests to submit witness slips and to contact legislators and/or the governor on issues and bills pertaining to criminal justice and juvenile justice.
- LWVIL successfully advocated for the legislation below either signed by the Governor or awaiting his signature:
 - **HB1268** provides that a person who has been convicted of a felony is qualified to act as an executor of an estate if certain conditions are met. HB1268 is the first success in eliminating the many permanent punishments imposed upon people returning from prison.
 - **HB1496 (PA103-0018)** enables IDOC to know home addresses for incarcerated citizens and to provide them to authorities for voting and census purposes.
 - **SB1886** eliminates drug testing fees, limits testing for alcohol and cannabis to appropriate cases, and ensures that doctors, not courts make treatment decisions for people on probation.
- LWVIL will continue to support legislation that will:
 - restore voting rights to incarcerated people
 - restore parole to those who have demonstrated rehabilitation or who are elderly
 - use public health strategies to reduce the harms associated with drug use
 - eliminate permanent punishments for those who have fully served their sentences
 - provide better support for those returning from prison
 - improve transparency in the court system

(See also LWVIL Gun Violence Prevention position, which became a separate position in 1989; LWVIL Death Penalty Abolition position, which was separated in 2005; LWVIL Mental Health; LWVIL State Election Laws position for action on securing voting rights for detainees; and LWVUS Social Policy positions.)

Death Penalty Abolition

LWVIL Position - 2001

LWVUS Concurrence - 2006

LWVIL Position

The League supports abolition of the death penalty in Illinois because it does not function as an appropriate punishment for the following reasons:

- In practice, the death penalty is unfair, it targets the poor and other vulnerable people— people who are mentally ill, mentally retarded, brain-damaged, and members of an ethnic or racial minority group.
- The death penalty is not a deterrent. States without the death penalty— Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan—have crime rates equal to or less than that of Illinois.
- The nations with which we most identify—the nations of the European Union and Canada, for example—have abolished the death penalty and consider it a violation of human rights.
- The death penalty does not serve the interests of family members of victims since the necessary and lengthy appeals process postpones the realization of justice and so, can retard the healing process.
- An error cannot be corrected if the death penalty is carried out on an innocent person.
- The death penalty is extremely expensive, due to the so-called precautions and extra measures taken to insure that only appropriate defendants receive the death penalty. Adding to the expense is the necessity for resentencing and retrials due to the extensive error-rate – nearly 50% of all cases in Illinois. Resources expended for the death penalty could be better used for positive programs that reduce crime and serve the victims of crime.
- Reform has been tried and has not worked. In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the death penalty statutes of 40 states. The Court held that extensive jury discretion over death sentences resulted in arbitrary sentencing and therefore resulted in “cruel and unusual” punishment. However, in 1976, after various states enacted reforms that limited discretion, the Supreme Court held that the death penalty was constitutional.

Illinois’ statute was a result of extensive reforms; and yet, the Governor’s Commission on Capital Punishment in April of 2002 identified 85 reforms that were needed to correct the system. Even though in 2003 a few significant reforms passed, the vast majority of the Commission’s recommendations were not addressed. Moreover, the Governor’s Commission recognized that even if every reform were adopted, the system would still not be error-free: “The Commission was unanimous in the belief that no system, given human nature and frailties, could ever be devised or constructed that would work perfectly and guarantee absolutely that no innocent person is ever again sentenced to death.” (Report of the Commission on Capital Punishment, Conclusion, pg. 207.)

Background

In 2001, LWVIL Convention delegates adopted the Evanston League’s position supporting abolition of the death penalty by concurrence.

In 2003–2004, LWVIL conducted a nation-wide campaign to bring a death penalty concurrence to the floor of the 2004 LWVUS convention. Although The effort fell short of the 2/3 vote needed for adoption, LWVIL was able to bring the issue back to the 2006 convention where the concurrence was adopted by a wide margin. It is now a LWVUS position.

LWVIL Action

2001

LWVIL Supported legislation to abolish the death penalty and opposed an anti-terrorism bill containing a provision expanding the death penalty to include murder committed in the course of terrorism.

2002

LWVIL and local Leagues wrote the Governor urging commutation of all death penalty sentences to life sentences without parole. Public education activities across the state included programs on the death penalty, sponsorship of Death Sentence 2002 at DePaul University and participation in the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty Conference in Chicago in October.

2003

An abolition bill was voted out of the House Judiciary committee following local League action. LWVIL thanked Governor Blagojevich for extending Governor Ryan’s moratorium and urged him to support abolition. LWVIL responded to the General Assembly’s reform efforts stating that reform could not be foolproof and legislation should apply to the entire criminal justice system.

2005

Responded to the “no doubt” legislation that the determination of guilt/innocence is only one of the many problems with the death penalty and does not repair the broken system.

2007

In testimony before the Capital Punishment Reform Study Committee LWVIL encouraged going beyond analysis of reform effectiveness and recommending abolition to the General Assembly.

Evidence that the death penalty was falling out of favor was becoming evident as the number of death sentences handed down dwindled and capital defendants were either found not guilty or their charges reduced before they came to trial.

2008

No death sentences were handed down in Cook County, and only three persons were sentenced to death elsewhere in the state. The Assembly of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) voted to make abolition the official policy of the 35,000 member State Bar, bringing its lobbyists to the abolition effort. LWVIL submitted testimony to the September House Judiciary II Committee hearings.

2009

LWVIL members asked legislators to co-sponsor the abolition bill, sponsored by Karen Yarbrough with 19 co-sponsors. It was voted out of committee and later re-referred to the Rules Committee. Also that year, two former death row inmates became the nineteenth and twentieth men to be exonerated from death row in Illinois. The Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (ICADP) partners developed a 1–3 year abolition strategy.

2010

ICADP asked for the League’s help to contact legislators in targeted districts and build quiet support so an abolition bill might pass during either the 2010 Veto Session or the spring 2011 session. A TFA explaining the strategy was included in the February Issues Briefing packets and sent to grassroots advocates and local League presidents.

Again in March, the League cosponsored the Abolition Lobby Day. Local Leagues and members built extensive support for abolition by visiting targeted legislators, writing postcards and letters and calling their legislators. Local Leagues also helped organize ICADP’s two speaking tours in the fall, featuring death row exonerees and murder victims’ family members. The abolition bill was not called for a vote during the Veto Session.

2011: VICTORY!

During the lame duck session, the House approved the measure on January 6th and the Senate approved on January 11th. On March 9, Governor Quinn signed the legislation, and he commuted the sentences of the fifteen men on death row to life without parole. Capital punishment was officially abolished in Illinois on July 1, 2011.

Since that time, legislation has been introduced in the General Assembly to restore the death penalty in Illinois. LWVIL monitors this legislation and remains ready to take action if any such proposal begins to gain support.

Gun Violence Prevention

Handgun Control

1976

LWVIL Position

To curb the proliferation of the private ownership of handguns and their irresponsible use, the League supports a ban on the further manufacture, sale, transportation and importation of handguns and their parts.

The League supports restrictive regulation of all handguns and ammunition, enforcement of existing regulations and strict penalties for crimes committed with a handgun.

The League favors federal legislation governing the use of handguns, but will support legislation at all levels of government meeting League criteria. The League will not support state or federal legislation for specific areas only, such as metropolitan or high crime areas.

To ensure that handgun owners assume complete responsibility for their handguns, the League supports registration of the handgun itself so that it can be traced to its owner. There should be comprehensive licensing procedures, with gun safety education, fingerprinting and photographs, plus a verification of the applicant's qualifications and a permit system that restricts handgun ownership. Sufficient fees should be paid by handgun owners to cover administrative costs. Ideally, local or state governments should enforce federal standards.

The League supports handgun safety education only if it is required for owners as part of the licensing procedure, does not promote or glorify handgun usage or ownership, and is used to convey the dangers of handgun misuse and ownership.

The League supports regulation of handgun dealers. All dealers selling handguns must be carefully regulated to assure that they are legitimate dealers and not merely persons wishing to have access to interstate shipments. The League recommends high fees, annual renewal of licenses and a thorough investigation of dealers and their places of business. The League supports the need for further controls or elimination of mail order sales and interstate shipments.

Assault Weapons Control

1989

LWVIL Position

The League advocates restricting access to automatic and semi-automatic assault type weapons by private individuals. These weapons present a clear and unequivocal danger to public safety. Therefore, the League believes that it is essential to restrict or prohibit the possession and sale, manufacture, importation and transportation of semi-automatic assault type weapons for private ownership. Additionally, the sale of ammunition for these weapons should be restricted or prohibited. The League favors restrictive legislation at both the state and federal levels.

Background

The LWVIL position on **handgun control** was reached in 1976 after a statewide study. The **assault weapons control** position was adopted by concurrence at the 1989 LWVIL Convention. LWVIL led the successful effort to adopt a **national gun control** position at the 1990 LWVUS Convention.

LWVIL is an active coalition partner with the Illinois Campaign Against Handgun Violence and maintains ties with the Brady Campaign.

LWVIL Action

2000

League had an active presence at the Chicago Million Mom March.

2004

LWVIL was represented at the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence (ICHV) Midwest Action Conference and cosponsored the ICHV Rally Against Handgun Violence.

2004–2005

LWVIL supported legislation:

- banning assault weapons and .50 caliber sniper rifles and ammunition;
- requiring those selling firearms in Illinois to be licensed;
- requiring mandatory trigger locks and
- requiring background checks on gun sales at Illinois gun shows.

2006

LWVIL engaged in a "Letters to the Editor" project advocating the passage of common sense gun laws. LWVIL initiated a successful publicity campaign for the Cook County LWV on the November advisory referendum to ban assault weapons; the vote was 86% in favor.

ident

The LWVUS supported extension of the Assault Weapons Ban, which was allowed to sunset in 2004.

The League unsuccessfully opposed the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (Immunity Bill).

2007

LWVIL received an ICPGV mini-grant to pursue meaningful gun violence reform in Illinois. With many relevant bills in the state legislature, ICPGV identified "Legislators of Focus" whom local League members targeted with in-district lobbying sessions on gun violence prevention and TFAs to the local League's general membership.

Gun issues questions were included in Legislative Interview questions used by Leagues throughout the state.

LWVIL coordinated a Letter to the Editor project advocating passage of common sense gun laws.

LWVUS supported extension of the Assault Weapons ban that was allowed to sunset in 2004.

2009

"Legislators of Focus" targeted by LCAV received in-district lobbying visits with local League members from Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, Homewood/Flossmoor, Naperville and Wheaton.

A bill that would have addressed the loophole allowing private sales of concealable guns without background checks failed in the House when 5 representatives reneged on their promise to vote yes.

A concealed carry bill passed the state legislature despite extensive LWVIL members' efforts to persuade Governor Quinn to sign it.

2010–2011

Supreme Court handed down its decision in McDonald v Chicago in June, striking down Chicago's long-standing handgun ban.

LWVIL supported House bills requiring universal background checks for all gun transactions and a ban of military-style weapons and ammunition. Neither came to a vote.

LWVIL opposed a House bill allowing extension of concealed-carry rights. The bill did not come up for a vote.

LWVIL and ICHV fought to defeat a new **Concealed-Carry Weapons** bill (HB 148), which would further extend gun owners' rights to carry concealed loaded guns in public places. LWVIL sent out several TFAs on and ICHV lobbied extensively against the bill, which failed.

2013

Many Times for Action (TFAs) were sent to League members throughout the spring session. Following the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals decision to strike down Illinois' Concealed Carry-Weapons (CCW) ban declaring it to be unconstitutional, our coalition, ICHV, planned an anti-gun Advocacy & Rally Day in Springfield. Many LWVIL members throughout the state attended; Gov. Quinn and many elected officials and victims' families spoke. . LWVIL distributed many copies of "Making Your Voice Heard" to other coalition members in Springfield.

Individual states can determine their own additions to CCW. ICHV has pursued several different restrictions where weapons may be carried. Although the coalition is very disappointed Illinois was forced to allow CCW, some common sense gun laws have been adopted: universal background checks on all gun sales and lost/stolen firearms must be reported to law enforcement within 72 hours.

2014

No new bills adopted except for minor language changes.

2015

Currently, ICHV is spearheading efforts to persuade municipal officials, local law enforcement and faith leaders from across Illinois to support a new state law that would require the licensing of gun dealers. At present there is not a state law, only a federal licensing law monitored by Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF) , which is checked approximately every 10 years. Since there are many difficulties in pursuing the above course of action, LWVIL is planning to involve local Leagues through the use of TFAs.

2015-2017

LWVIL continues to be a member of Illinois Coalition Against Handgun Violence (ICHV). The coalition is composed of many anti-gun violence groups, agencies, and religious organizations.

For the past two years, the League has been working with the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence to advocate for a state law that would require the licensing of gun dealers. At present there is not a state law, only a federal licensing law monitored by Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF), which is checked approximately every 10 years.

Time for Action: Over the past two years, LWVIL issued TFA's related to a Lethal Violence Protection for Family members and to Gun Dealer Licensing.

2018-2019

The League supported the Firearms Restraining Order and the Combating Illegal Handguns Trafficking Act, which were revised versions of the Lethal Violence Order of Protection and the Gun Dealer Licensing Act.

Both bills passed and were

signed into law. The League opposed a Resolution to Arm Teachers and led the statewide Coalition to defeat the Resolution.

The League supports the Fix the Foid [Firearms Owners' Identification Card] to strengthen restrictions on applications for a FOID.

2020-2021

The League supported the "Fix-the-FOID" bill (HB1091) that was proposed in both the 2020 and 2021 sessions. This bill was proposed in response to the mass shooting at the Henry Pratt Manufacturing Company in Aurora in 2019. The bill passed the House in both the 2020 and 2021 sessions. However, due to the Covid shortened session in 2020, the bill did not get a vote in the Senate. In 2021, the bill was not called in the Senate because the supporters were not assured there were 30 votes to pass. Lack of support was attributed to the fingerprint requirement.

A substitute bill (SB562) became law making fingerprinting optional. It also included requiring background checks on all gun sales including private sales, requires ISP to remove guns from holders of revoked FOID cards, creates a stolen gun data base and a prohibited persons data base.

Safe storage bills were proposed in both 2020 and 2021, which the League was prepared to support. However, these bills did not get out of committee.

The League supported a proposal (HB1092) to clarify and update the “Firearms Restraining Order” Law in 2021. This bill was signed into law

2023-2025

Proposed Program for the 2023-2025 Biennium

The LWV of Illinois Board of Directors recommends the undertaking of a study on the current Gun Violence Prevention position. This study would consider whether the current LWV of Illinois statement on handgun safety education needs to be broadened and whether there needs to be a more inclusive statement on the types of guns that are addressed by the position.

New Illinois Gun Laws in 2022-23

The 2022-23 Illinois legislative sessions saw many bills proposed regarding firearms on both sides of the issue. None of the proposed bills that targeted weakening of existing Illinois gun safety laws made it out of committee. Likewise, many bills proposed to improve gun safety in Illinois also did not make it out of committee. The following is a listing of those bills that were passed and signed into law during 2022-23 legislative sessions,

HB4729 - DPH- Safe Gun Storage Campaign

Amends the Department of Public Health Powers and Duties Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois. Requires the Department of Public Health to develop and implement a comprehensive two-year statewide safe gun storage public awareness campaign. Provides that the campaign shall include sustained and focused messaging over the course of the two-year campaign period, messages paired with information about enforcement or incentives for safe gun storage, and geographic and cultural considerations. The campaign shall be developed by the Department of Public Health subject to appropriation.

HB5193 - Gun Safety Info

Amends the School Code. Mandates that every school district shall include safe gun storage information in schools' student handbooks. Effective immediately.

HB4383 – Ban Ghost Guns

Provides that it shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly sell, offer to sell, or transfer an unserialized unfinished frame or receiver or unserialized firearm, including those produced using a three-dimensional printer, unless the party purchasing or receiving the unfinished frame or receiver or unserialized firearm is a federal firearms importer, federal firearms manufacturer, or federal firearms dealer.

HB5471 – Protect Illinois Communities Act (AKA: Assault Weapons Ban)

Preceding bill numbers: HB5855 and SB2226

Amends the Illinois State Police Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois. Provides that the Division of Criminal Investigation of the Illinois State Police shall conduct other investigations as provided by law, including, but not limited to, investigations of human trafficking, illegal drug trafficking, and illegal firearms trafficking. Provides that the Division of Criminal Investigation shall provide statewide coordination and strategy pertaining to firearm-related intelligence, firearms trafficking interdiction, and investigations. Amends the Firearm Owners Identification Card Act. Provides that a petitioner may request a plenary firearms restraining order of up to one-year, but not less than 6 months (rather than 6 months). Provides that the order may be renewed for an additional period of up to one year. Amends the Criminal Code of 2012. Provides that beginning January 1, 2024, it is unlawful for any person within the State to knowingly possess an assault weapon, assault weapon attachment, .50 caliber rifle, or .50 caliber cartridge, with exemptions, and provides penalties. Provides that it is unlawful for any person within the State to knowingly manufacture, deliver, sell, purchase, or cause to be manufactured, delivered, sold, or purchased a large capacity ammunition feeding device, with specified exemptions, and provides penalties. Contains a severability provision. Amends the Freedom of Information Act. Exempts from disclosure under the Act certain information concerning endorsements received by the Illinois State Police. Effective immediately.

HB218 – Firearms Industry Responsibility Act (FIRA)

Provides that it is an unlawful practice within the meaning of the Act for any firearm industry member, through the sale, manufacturing, importing, or marketing of a firearm-related product, to: (i) knowingly

create, maintain, or contribute to a condition in Illinois that endangers the safety or health of the public by conduct either unlawful in itself or unreasonable under all circumstances, including failing to establish or utilize reasonable controls; (ii) advertise, market, or promote a firearm-related product in a manner that reasonably appears to support, recommend, or encourage individuals to engage in unlawful paramilitary or private militia activity; (iii) advertise, market, promote, design, or sell any firearm-related product in a manner that reasonably appears to support, recommend, or encourage persons under 18 years of age to unlawfully purchase or unlawfully possess or use a firearm-related product; or (iv) otherwise engage in unfair methods of competition or unfair or deceptive acts or practices declared unlawful under the Act. Provides that the provisions of the amendatory Act are severable.

Immigration

2007

LWVIL Position

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes:

- That the State of Illinois should promote local community efforts to provide orientation and counseling services for immigrants regardless of documentation status. The State of Illinois should support funding efforts for these services by encouraging federal funding and by the use of funds from the state and local governments as well as from the private sector.
- That the State of Illinois should promote and fund educational programs and materials that seek to inform all workers, including documented and undocumented immigrants, of their rights in the workplace.
- That the State of Illinois should provide "driving certificates" or some other form of proof of driving validation to undocumented drivers, allowing those drivers to drive legally and ensuring that they would have passed a state driving test. LWVIL also believes the State of Illinois should permit and encourage auto insurance providers to issue insurance coverage to holders of such driving certificates.

LWVIL opposes:

- Deputization of state and local police to enforce immigration laws in Illinois.
- Legislation or ordinances at the state and local level that would penalize landlords for renting to undocumented immigrants.
- Legislation or ordinances at the state and local level that would prohibit the issuance of business permits to undocumented immigrants.

LWVIL does not support extending the right to vote to undocumented immigrants.

Background

The topic had crept up the "awareness ladder" in the United States. Specifically, in Illinois, a state with one of the largest immigrant populations in the country, it was and continues to be debated regularly in the media and by our elected local and state officials. Because of the federal government's inability to pass enforceable immigration laws, legislation was and still is being introduced in the General Assembly and communities have been considering local ordinances to address immigration issues.

The scope of the June 2005 LWVIL adopted study was: "How should Illinois respond to the challenges and opportunities of immigration in the areas of economic policy, social policy which includes education, and the governmental process?" Following the two-year study funded through the generosity of local Leagues, the study committee narrowed the focus of the consensus questions to what could be addressed at the state level. In addition to those questions where there was consensus and that now make up the immigration position, the LWVUS and LWVIL have existing positions on fiscal policy and social policy to include education and healthcare that do not specify citizenship as a prerequisite to application as needed.

LWVIL Action

2009–2011

Immigration Reform did not advance. At the federal level, President Obama did not have the votes to pass any meaningful legislation. During the lame duck session, Illinois Senator Durbin and others were unsuccessful in passing a federal Dream Act to provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. New laws introduced in several states in 2010 were intended to restrict undocumented immigrant activity (i.e., renting housing or gathering for day jobs) and to give local police the right to question drivers and ask for identification.

2011–2013

The Obama Administration created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), deferring deportation for certain undocumented young people who came to the US as children and pursued education or military service in the US. An estimated 15,000 came to Navy Pier in Chicago on the first day of registration for this program.

In 2011, The Illinois DREAM Act passed, offering undocumented youth access to higher education by establishing a privately-funded Illinois DREAM Fund at no cost to Illinois taxpayers.

In 2013, Illinois passed a law allowing undocumented immigrants in Illinois to get a Temporary Visitor Driver's License (TVDL). These licenses are different from regular Illinois licenses and are not valid for identification but do allow holders to drive legally.

2015–2017

In Illinois, many immigrant-friendly organizations provided "Know Your Rights" trainings and organized family and estate planning (to help provide temporary custody for children) for those who could be possibly be deported and separated from their families as a result of the Trump Administration's Muslim Ban and anti-immigrant policies. Schools saw an increased rate of absenteeism from immigrant populations. The Illinois General Assembly responded with proposals ranging from inviting Mexico's President Pena Nieto to Illinois to increasing immigrant protections in the state.

2017–2019

LWVIL continued to work in coalition with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) to support and help pass important immigration bills, helping to make Illinois one of the most welcoming states in the country.

In 2017, the Illinois Trust Act passed, limiting police involvement in federal immigration enforcement.

Also in 2017, the Chicago City Council approved a Municipal ID program, providing identification cards for individuals who either cannot or have difficulty obtaining government-issued documents, including immigrants, homeless persons, persons with disabilities, returning citizens, and transgender individuals. Chicago's Welcoming City Ordinance (2012, 2016 and updated in 2021) already limits access of immigration status information and interactions with immigration enforcement.

In 2018, the VOICES Act passed, ensuring that immigrant survivors of trafficking and certain qualifying violent crimes can have access to U or T visas in the state of Illinois.

During the 2018 LWVUS June Convention in Chicago, delegates joined with thousands of others to march downtown, opposing the Trump Administration's family separation and detention of children policies.

2019 to 2021

During the spring 2019 Legislative Session, LWVIL supported the Retention of IL Student & Equity Act (RISE

Act), Private Detention Facility Moratorium Act, and Stop Local Police from Becoming ICE Agents (KIFTA). All passed and were signed into law by the governor. In fact, 16 pro-immigrant bills passed during this session. Additionally, LWWIL supported restoration of immigration funding (ISLI).

For the spring 2020 Legislative Session, LWWIL worked with ICIRR and its coalition groups as part of the Campaign for a Welcoming Illinois (C4WIL) to support a legislative platform that responded to immigrant communities suffering disproportionately from the Coronavirus Pandemic. The General Assembly approved a significant increase in funding for ISLI and approved state healthcare access for undocumented immigrants for those ages 65 and up.

For the Spring 2021 Legislative Session, with immigrant communities still feeling the disproportionate effects of the continuing pandemic, LWWIL continued to support ICIRR in asking for healthcare for all, safety for all, and economic security for all.

On August 2, 2021, Governor Pritzker signed The Illinois Way Forward Act, mandating that all immigrant detention centers in Illinois close by 2022. Local jails will no longer be allowed to detain immigrants arrested by ICE. Illinois is one of only three states in the nation to pass such protections. The General Assembly also approved lowering the age for healthcare access to 55 for undocumented immigrants. Additionally, state immigration funding was again increased. Focus remains on approving legal representation for all detained immigrants and passing the Earned Income Credit to enable immigrants who file tax returns using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN) to receive the state EITC.

(See LWWUS Immigration position.)

Income Assistance

1971, Revised 1997

LWWIL Position

LWWIL believes that the federal government should bear primary responsibility for financing programs designed to meet the basic needs of individuals and families.

LWWIL supports secondary state funding for income assistance and supportive services for all low-income individuals and families.

The administration of income assistance and supportive services requires the recruitment, retention, and training of sufficient numbers of qualified personnel; clear guidelines for responsibility; adequate information systems; and program evaluation.

Background

1971

LWWIL and LWWUS conducted simultaneous studies of income assistance and alternatives to welfare. A revised position was adopted at the 1997 Convention, affirming that federal funding should be the primary source for income assistance; the State's role should be a strong secondary, not supplemental, source.

2013

As of the Spring 2013 legislative session, TANF recipients no longer have an asset limitation in Illinois. This means having assets such as a car, house, savings account no longer are counted as income, thus helping to promote higher self sufficiency for the family.

2015

Survey results of state-funded homeless service providers found 90% of these providers needing to deny assistance. The lack of funding since July 2015 has affected programs such as Homelessness Prevention,

Homeless Youth, Emergency and Transitional Housing and Supportive Housing Services, even with increased demand for these services. Some programs for adolescent substance abuse treatment programs have closed without the state funding help. In addition to the lack of state funds, providers are concerned with the impact in the provision of matching federal dollar funding.

Two housing legislation pieces passed in 2015: SB 1440, the Reverse Mortgage Consumer Protections, which includes provisions to be certain seniors considering reverse mortgages are protected against scams and predatory lending practices. SB1547, protecting people from punishment for calling 911 in response to domestic or sexual violence or for crimes committed against them, seen as "nuisance calls".

LWVIL Action

The League continually works for adequate grant levels and automatic cost-of-living increases, along with better salaries and a separation of clerical and casework staff functions for the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS).

LWV is concerned that IDHS staff reductions in local offices and high caseloads result in low quality services. LWVIL has supported retention of and increased funding for, assistance programs such as TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), food stamps, low-income utility payments, the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental food program and family planning programs. LWVIL supported legislation that increased the TANF grant to Illinois families.

The League worked for a rewrite of the Illinois Public Aid Code and a strengthened emergency assistance system.

Federal level: LWVIL opposed the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 that ended the federal entitlement income support to all eligible low-income families and **shifted major responsibility for meeting basic human needs from the federal government to the states**. Working in coalition with other advocacy organizations, LWVIL followed and responded to state welfare proposals and submitted comments on the Illinois Plan for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

1996–1997

LWVIL monitored and provided input into the state human services reorganization process.

1999

LWVIL advocated for the passage and funding of the **Illinois Equal Justice Act** designed to help lower-income families navigate the complex legal system on such civil matters as Medicaid, food stamps and illegal evictions.

2003

LWVIL supported legislation to establish a refundable state **earned income tax credit (EITC)**, a critical form of income assistance to help working families.

League worked in coalition with Voices for Illinois Children and other groups on a long-term educational and advocacy campaign to enact a **state EITC**.

League supported the Voices for Illinois Children's Budget and Tax Policy Initiative that identified **spending policies in legislation that affect children and families**

League supported effective child support guidelines and collection efforts.

LWVIL worked with coalitions to improve the well-being of low-income families through monitoring TANF reauthorization, WIA (Workforce Investment Act) and the Food Stamp program.

2008

While there was a small TANF increase, the economic climate did not allow salaries deemed to be a living wage to raise a family's income above the poverty level. In addition, fewer voucher opportunities and higher rents led to more homeless individuals and families with children needing services.

IL budget cuts meant cuts in crucial services to vulnerable individuals and families just when those services were most needed. Education and training opportunities - needed for a skilled modern workforce - lagged behind the growing numbers of people needing them.

League supported a refundable state earned income tax credit increase and the effective Workforce Investment Act.

LWVIL worked with Voices for IL Children, Housing Action IL, National Low Income Housing Coalition, Illinois Works for the Future, the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and groups at the State and Federal levels. We joined the Responsible Budget Coalition to regain funding for services to lower income families and individuals in Illinois.

2009-2011

LWVIL supported an improved **workforce development system** to aid disadvantaged job seekers and low income workers throughout the state, including more post high school educational opportunities.

LWVIL continues to support efforts to provide funding for **supportive living initiatives** including food programs and utility aid programs LWVIL supported **child care assistance for low income families** for whom quality child care is vital, and worked to keep co- payment requirements at a reasonable level.

LWVIL has supported an increase in the **Earned Income Tax Credit** to give more money back to low income workers and help meet families' needs.

LWVIL has worked to provide **safe, affordable and quality housing**: ensuring safe housing for domestic violence victims and protecting renters in foreclosed homes and apartments

LWVIL continues to support capital budget funds for **affordable housing**, including housing for veterans and people with disabilities.

LWVIL has supported State level initiatives to help struggling homeowners to modify their mortgages so they can afford their payments and avoid foreclosures.

We continue to monitor such funds as the CDBG and CSBG as well as the Low Income Housing Trust Fund.

2011-2013

League continues to advocate for quality child care assistance and early intervention/early learning funding. We continue to advocate for funding from Federal and State resources for affordable housing efforts for all individuals and families including veterans and people with disabilities.

We continue to advocate for State support for those struggling with their mortgages and possible foreclosures.

In addition, the League is advocating for a raise in the minimum wage [presently \$8.25 per hour] here in Illinois to help workers to become more self-sufficient in their daily lives. Many low income individuals within a family are working more than one job daily and yet are struggling to provide the basic living needs of housing, utilities, child care, transportation and food. Raising the minimum wage also will strengthen the local small business economy since families would spend the income in their communities. Presently, a full time minimum wage job pays just \$17,160 annually, well below the federal poverty level of \$19,090 for a family of three.

2013-2015

League continues to advocate for early intervention programs, TANF assistance, Medicaid and child care programs and employment training programs to be funded well. We advocate for SNAP [food assistance] to be well funded. The U.S. Farm Bill was passed, which provides the food assistance rules for the Country.

The League advocated for an advisory referendum to increase the minimum wage to \$10. While the referendum passed, no action has been taken by the Legislature.

The League of Women Voters IL positions re employment, children's issues, income assistance, fair housing, affordable housing and public transportation remain in need of advocates around Illinois. We continue to work with resources on these from Voices for Illinois Children, Shriver Poverty Law Center, Housing Action Illinois, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Chicago Jobs Council, Citizen Action/IL, Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and other research agencies, including CLASP, National Low Income Housing Agency and Center for Budget Policy Priorities on the national level.

2015–2017

We have concerns regarding the tax policies which help top income families and corporations while cutting services highly needed for working families and older Americans, including Medicaid, SNAP, education, housing and children's services.

2018–2019

SB 1, which was passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Pritzker increases the minimum wage in IL from \$8.25 to \$15.00 by Jan. 1, 2025. There are efforts to see the same wage mandate enacted nationally.

In July 2019, the EQUAL PAY ACT signed by Gov. Pritzker amends the Equal Pay Act of 2003 and prohibits IL employers from asking job applicants or their previous employers about salary history.

Low and Moderate Income Housing

LWVIL Position

The Illinois League believes

- The State should plan for adequate supplies of low and moderate-income housing.
- Builders of large developments and planned unit developments should be required to provide a percentage of their units for low and moderate income housing.
- Some kind of fair-share plan should be developed so that every community will have a percentage of low and moderate income housing, rather than having it concentrated in a few areas of the state. This kind of housing should be attractive and diversified in design and should be subsidized by both state and federal levels.
- The League believes an educational program is needed to explain the need for and concept of low and moderate-income housing and that, when necessary, zoning laws should be revised to accommodate such housing.

LWVIL Action

2015–2017

LWVIL has worked with National Low Income Housing Coalition and Housing Action IL as well as IHDA on the many issues in affordable and fair housing. IHDA works to give funding opportunities to aid lower income and moderate individuals and families for the housing needs.

In 2016, the first National Housing Trust Fund dollars, \$4.3 million, were allocated to Illinois to create and preserve and rehab rental homes that are affordable for extremely low income households. These funds will be used for housing people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness or household head with a disability or illness.

2018–2019

LWVIL tracked bills that would have provided funds for affordable housing, for lead poisoning prevention, for homelessness prevention, for sealing eviction records, for protecting immigrant tenants,

2020–2021

LWVIL supported the 2021 Build Illinois Homes Tax Credit Act, which would have provided income and property tax incentives to build and preserve affordable housing in IL and programs to prevent homeowners from losing their homes through mortgage foreclosure or due to circumstances of the COVID 19 pandemic. The bill did not advance.

LWVIL continued its support of the Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act of 2004 which was amended in 2005 and 2021

Along with an extensive list of fair housing advocates and nonprofits, LWVIL joined the Illinois Coalition for Fair Housing, HOPE Fair Housing Center, and Housing Choice Partners to amend the Homeless Prevention Act to prohibit discrimination against housing voucher holders, the disabled and others with legal sources of income in their right to apply for housing.

LWVIL also supported two housing bills aimed at helping individuals with mental and addiction health needs to maintain the housing they need for recovery and ongoing care. (See mental health section).

2020–2022

LWVIL continued its support of the **Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act** of 2004 which was amended in 2005 and again in 2021. The 2021 amendment that passed under **SB1476** provides that to comply with the Act's affordable housing plan requirements, no later than 4 years after adopting or updating an affordable housing plan the local government shall submit a report to the Illinois Housing Development Authority summarizing actions taken to implement the current plan.

Along with an extensive list of fair housing advocates and nonprofits, LWVIL joined the Illinois Coalition for Fair Housing, HOPE Fair Housing Center, and Housing Choice Partners to amend the **Homeless Prevention Act** with **HB2775** (SOI – Sources of Income Discrimination) which prohibits discrimination against housing voucher holders, the disabled and others with legal sources of income in their right to apply for housing.

LWVIL also supported **HB0449 Housing is Recover Pilot Program Act** which was signed into law in 2022. (See also mental health section). This Act provides for bridge rental subsidies for individuals at high risk of unnecessary institutionalization and individuals at high risk of overdose for purposes of stabilizing their mental illness or substance abuse disorder.

LWVIL supported the 2021 Build Illinois Homes Tax Credit Act which would provide income and property tax incentives to build and preserve affordable housing in IL and programs to prevent homeowners from losing their homes through mortgage foreclosure or due to circumstances of the COVID 19 pandemic.

(See LWVIL Social Policy positions.)

Mental Health

1987 and 1989

LWVIL Position

The League supports a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for mental/behavioral health. The Illinois Department of Human Services should ensure both adequate state hospitals and community services to treat and rehabilitate the seriously mentally ill. These services should be integrated with those of other state agencies.

A state mandate that adequate and accessible community services be available for seriously mentally ill persons of all ages. The array of services should include: screening and evaluation, community hospitalization, medication management and counseling, crisis intervention, case management, day treatment, life skills programs, residential programs, job training, social and recreational activities, educational services, family support and respite programs, and transportation.

The State should provide adequate funding for state facilities and should be the primary source of funding for community-based mental health services. Local government, together with federal and non-government sources, should also contribute to community services. Funding should be tied to identified needs and effectiveness of services.

State and local government should share the responsibility for planning for community services; implementation should be left to local government. A system of local boards to administer funds for services for the mentally ill should be required throughout the state. The boards should have the power to tax and to allocate state and federal funds for community services and for hospitalization of mentally ill persons. The boards should coordinate and monitor community services.

The State should set and enforce standards for all mental health programs and facilities it funds. The State should also be responsible for evaluating community-based services. There should be minimum training requirements for professionals and other personnel working in state-funded programs. The State should require local governments to provide in their zoning ordinances for residential programs for mentally ill persons.

The League encourages increased use of involuntary commitment to outpatient services of seriously mentally ill persons, when appropriate, to assist in keeping them from repeated and prolonged hospitalizations.

Insurance companies should be required to offer coverage for mental illness on the same basis as physical illness.

Community education about mental illness should be emphasized, and innovative ways to improve the delivery of community-based mental health services should be encouraged. Financial incentives should be offered to communities that reduce unnecessary hospital bed usage by providing adequate community-based services while assuring that mentally ill persons who need hospitalization will not be denied.

Background

1985

LWVIL Convention established a task force to examine the state mental health system; findings reported in *1986 Public Policy on Mental Illness in Illinois*.

1987

LWVIL Convention established a position by concurrence, based on the task force conclusions, and adopted a two-year study of all aspects of community mental health services. Consensus was reached in 1989.

1989

A Profile of Community Services for the Mentally Ill of Illinois reported a failure to develop services. That year the LWVIL Convention adopted a two-year Action Campaign to promote community education and combat the stigma of mental illness. Grants were awarded to local Leagues to conduct specially-designed projects.

1990

The League received a special award for Public Service to People with Serious Mental Illness from the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the Public Citizen Health Research Group.

1993

LWVIL published *A Home of Their Own*, to assist local community advocates working for more housing options.

LWVIL Action

Children's Services

1997

LWVIL testified on quality of and access to services resulting from closure of the Metropolitan Child and Adolescent Hospital in Chicago.

1998

Commented on an administrative rule affecting individual care grants for mentally ill children.

2003

LWVIL supported the creation of the Children's Mental Health Partnership; worked with them to implement the *Strategic Plan for Building a Comprehensive Children's Mental Health System in Illinois*.

LWVIL provided written testimony in April 2004 on the Fee for Service (FFS) plan to the House Special Committee on the Fee-for-Service Initiative.

League worked in coalition for over five years to achieve insurance parity for mental illness and continued to advocate for stronger legislation. At the national level, Congress passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Dominici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 requiring the Departments of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS) and Treasury to issue regulations before the act went into effect in 2010.

Mental Health Summit Coalition

LWVIL has been a coalition partner to preserve and increase mental health services funding. Activities include media work, lobbying, engaging traditional and non-traditional allies and identifying issues that focus attention on the problems caused by underfunding mental health services in the state.

2009–2011 Action

Supported keeping new federal and state funds in the mental health system.

Continued to advocate on behalf of persons in prisons, jails, nursing homes and homeless shelters by monitoring and promoting programs that would improve inmates' and residents' lives.

Testified before Governor Quinn's Nursing Home Safety Reform Commission.

2011 Action

Local Leagues testified at public hearings opposing mental health facility closures due to state budget cuts without plans in place to serve clients.

LWVIL wrote a letter in support of a multi-purpose facility to be built in the NW Chicago suburbs that would provide low income housing and mental health services.

2012–2013 Action

- From 2009 to 2011 Illinois cut almost \$114 million in General Revenue funding for mental health and was fourth in all the states for total cuts. During that period, Illinois cut its total mental health care budget by more than 30 percent. The Governor signed HB190 in March 2013 restoring \$12 million supplement funding allocation for FY 13.
- The Governor signed PA 97-0439 amendment to the Community Mental Health Act (405ILCS20) to mandate counties and Cook County townships with no local mental health authorities to form a mental health advisory committee. The seven-member mental health advisory committee is charged with identifying and assessing current mental health services, monitoring the expansion or contraction of those services, and, if necessary, recommending any additional services. The boards should have the power to tax and to allocate state and federal funds for community services and hospitalization of mentally ill persons.
- On July 22, 2013 Senate Bill 26 went into law as Public Act 98-0104. This law will implement the Affordable Care Act in Illinois by expanding Medicaid to 138% of the poverty level. This expansion will result in the largest increase in mental health funding in the state since the enactment of Medicaid decades ago.
- LWVIL advocated for the HB1538 Mental Health First Aid training act. The Department of Human Services will establish and administer the act so that certified trainers can provide Illinois residents, professionals and members of the public with training on how to identify and assist someone who is

believed to be developing or has developed a mental health or substance abuse disorder or is believed to be experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis.

2015-17 Governmental Action

Illinois continues to offer expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Health Care Act, which has opened affordable treatment programs for persons with mental health and substance abuse problems. Stroger Hospital, which serves Cook county residents, is running without a deficit-the first time in recent decades. The Governor has proposed a significant cut to Medicaid services, which would be detrimental to these populations. Under state law, Chicago residents can gather petition signatures to place a binding referendum on the ballot to establish an Expanded Mental Health Services Program (EMHSP). Passage of the referendum will increase property tax by .025 % (A \$16 increase for a \$4,000 annual real estate bill). Funds are only for mental health services in the referendum-affected community. A governing commission of local residents oversees the funds. EMHSP's exist in the North River area and the Near West side.

Besides the new West side EMHP in Chicago, two Mental Health Boards (708) were created in Knox County and Bloomingdale Township (Thanks to the effort of the Roselle/Bloomingdale LWV) in the April 2017 election. Bloomingdale Township has a population of 111,000.

Local Leagues can take action under the state position, which supports the establishment of mental health authorities (337, 533, 708 and the recent EMHSP's in the city of Chicago). All these boards are established by referenda. With shrinking state dollars and possible Block grants on the Federal level, local tax money for mental health services will be increasingly important.

In 2021, a new Mental Health Board was created in Milton Township, becoming the second in DuPage county, with great contributions from the local League in Glen Ellyn.

Referenda were also passed in Elgin Township and Dundee Township to create Mental Health Boards, however, they are now the subject of a legal battle with Kane County.

The COVID pandemic brought into focus mental health needs.

2021

LWVIL Issued Time for Action alerts for three bills which were signed into law:

- Housing is Recovery recognizes that affordable housing is an integral component of healthcare. The program also promotes racial equity. Black communities are disproportionately impacted by a lack of access to treatment and safe, affordable housing. Access to housing and support services can change this. Individuals living with severe mental health or substance use conditions who are experiencing homelessness will have an opportunity to get a bridge rental subsidy and support services through this program.
- The Community Emergency Services and Support Act provides for the creation of mobile crisis response teams across the state and provides that each 911 call center must coordinate with the mobile mental health services established by the Illinois Division of Mental Health. This bill was another of NAMI's (National Alliance on Mental Illness), one of our partner organizations, high priority pieces of legislation.
- HB2595 requires medically necessary mental health care to be covered by insurance beginning January 1, 2023. This is a great victory for increasing access to mental health and addiction treatment in Illinois. It makes Illinois one of the first states in the country to require coverage of medically necessary mental health and addiction care and hold health insurers accountable for their coverage determinations.

2021-2022

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The COVID pandemic brought into focus mental health needs.

In 2022, eight new Mental Health boards were created in the greater Chicagoland area. These boards were created in Naperville, Addison, Lisle, Schaumburg, Vernon and Wheeling Townships, as well as Will County.

Schools

School Quality

1986 and 1987

LWVIL Position

Governance

The League believes that:

- The State of Illinois should determine a minimum program for Illinois elementary and secondary schools.
- The Illinois State Board of Education should assume the primary leadership role in initiating policy, establishing minimum standards, and coordinating delivery of services.
- The local school board should implement minimum standards and provide leadership in the community for program development. In addition, the local school board should make recommendations to the Illinois State Board of Education concerning programs for Illinois schools.

Primary Purpose of Schooling

The League believes:

- The primary purpose of schooling is the transmission of knowledge and culture through which children learn in areas necessary to their continuing development.
- Such areas should include the language arts, mathematics, biological and physical science, social sciences, the fine arts, physical development and health.
- Emphasis should be placed on the development of critical thinking skills and the integration of knowledge.
- Each school district shall give priority in the allocation of resources to fulfilling the primary purpose of schooling.

State Program Mandates

- The League supports the following instructional mandates: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies/history, foreign language, art and music, vocational education, special education, gifted education, early childhood education and health education. There should be flexibility in implementing mandates at the local level.
- Mandates such as metric measurement, career education, safety education and consumer education should be integrated into other programs rather than existing as separate mandates. Driver education and physical education, especially at the high school level, should continue but with more local options permitted. The League supports bilingual programs to enable non-English-speaking children to learn English as quickly as possible, but programs must be flexible.
- Local school districts should be required to provide the following services: media programs, school food services, pupil personnel services, student health programs, necessary transportation services and special services to disadvantaged children.
- The League supports state requirements for compulsory attendance and minimum standards for length of school day and school year. The League opposes any additional state-mandated school holidays.

State Standards for Schools and Students

The State should set standards for the recognition and accreditation of schools and school districts. The goals and learning objectives established by the State should be minimum standards, which local districts should enhance. Local districts should be permitted and encouraged to be flexible in the evaluation of students' learning of essential information and skills.

The State should set minimum achievement standards for graduation and promotion to various grade levels. Remediation programs should be provided at all levels of instruction for students achieving below grade level.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Education

- The League believes that the effectiveness of education should be evaluated by both class time requirements and knowledge gained as measured by mastery of learning objectives.
- Evaluation should include information assembled for the school/school district Report Cards, student test scores, programs offered, student/staff ratios, building standards, and qualifications of teachers. No one factor (e.g., test scores) should be used exclusively.
- The League does not support the withdrawal of funds from a school district that does not meet state standards, but does approve withdrawal of recognition as a last resort, after extensive and creative remediation efforts have been tried.

Personnel Issues

Teacher training and certification: The League supports stringent entrance requirements into a four-year undergraduate program for students who intend to teach. Such students should pursue an undergraduate course of study that primarily emphasizes the liberal arts and sciences and allows for early and varied teaching experiences. Certification should be granted after the student obtains a liberal arts and sciences degree, completes a successful period of internship and passes an objective test to ensure competency in basic skills and subject matter to be taught.

Staff Evaluation: The League supports a comprehensive evaluation process for both teachers and principals.

Teachers should be evaluated by administrators (principals, department chair or other administrators) and other teachers, all of whom should receive training in teacher evaluations. A comprehensive evaluation should be based on the following criteria: attendance, classroom management skills, instructional methods, knowledge of subject matter, continuing professional education and interpersonal skills.

Principals: Evaluations of principals should be done by administrators and teachers who are trained to evaluate. The evaluation should be based on the following criteria: ability to maintain productive parent-school relationships, organizational skills, ability to establish and preserve a positive school climate, instructional leadership, ability to objectively evaluate personnel and their teaching skills, continuing professional education and interpersonal skills.

Tenure: The League favors modifications in the tenure laws including extension of the two-year probationary period, establishment of a plan for periodic renewal of tenure and elimination of seniority as the sole criterion for dismissal of teachers when reducing the teaching force (RIF, reduction in force).

Quality: To ensure that the teaching profession attracts and retains highly qualified teachers, the League supports:

- An increase in beginning teachers' salaries financed either by the State directly or through grants to local districts to use at their discretion for increased salaries.
- An increase in the role of teachers in instructional leadership and management decisions
- Establishment of a career ladder for teachers which includes increased salaries for increased teacher responsibilities and an increase in salary for teachers who take advanced courses or obtain advanced degrees.

School Finance

1975, 1977, 1979, revised 1993

LWVIL Position

The League believes that:

- Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade public schools should be provided stable, reliable and adequate revenue through a combination of federal, state and local sources.
- State funding levels should be sufficient to enable districts to provide for all students an education that meets both standards established by the State Board of Education and legislated mandates.

The League opposes additional mandates without state funding provisions.

- The State should not subsidize districts too small to meet state standards but rather should encourage consolidation through financial incentives.
- State standards for education should also address the importance of adequately maintaining and building school facilities.

General state aid to schools should be reviewed regularly, taking into account increases in the cost of living, professional estimates of the cost of quality educational programs, and regional differences in the costs of providing the same or similar services.

- The League strongly supports using a weighting factor for low-income students, believing that basic funding for disadvantaged students should reflect their need for additional services.
- Local districts should be held accountable by the State for the expenditure of money for programs that fill special student needs.

The distribution of state funds to public elementary and secondary schools should reduce financial disparities between districts and increase equity for students and for taxpayers.

- The State should concentrate its efforts on raising the level of the financial resources of poorer districts.
- Capping of allowable expenditure per pupil should not be used as a means to achieve equity.
- A reasonable minimum local tax effort, achievable without referendum, should be required for a district to receive equalization aid.
- The League strongly supports reduced reliance on local property taxes to fund schools and believes that the State should assume the major responsibility for funding public education.
- The League opposes proposals that would provide public funds for private schools.
- The income tax (preferably at a graduated rate) provides the most productive and equitable source of revenue for schools.
- The League opposes state assumption of the total cost of public education because it could diminish local control and educational innovation.

Higher Education Funding

2017

LWVIL Position

LWVIL supports sustained allocation of state funds for public higher education that will provide quality postsecondary programs throughout the state. Objectives for adequate public funding should be to:

- Provide affordable educational opportunities which foster global competitiveness for the people of Illinois and their employers
- Eliminate and prohibit barriers to funding higher education: constitutional, statutory, and regulatory
- Invest in capital construction and long-term maintenance of higher education facilities
- Attract, maintain, and retain quality teaching staff

In addition, the League supports sustained funding to attract, support, and retain qualified Illinois students through:

- State-funded, need-based financial aid
- State-funded, merit-based scholarships
- State-funded grants paying for research assistantships
- State-subsidized internships

Charter Schools

2001, updated in 2015

LWVIL Position

The League of Women Voters of Illinois supports accountability, transparency, and equity in the use of public funds for education, including charter schools.

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes that

- Adequate and equitable funding is needed for all public schools, including charters. The financial impact on traditional public schools must be evaluated before charters are granted.
- Charter school authorizers should evaluate the performance of existing charters before granting new charters or approving additional campuses.
- Existing charter schools should be evaluated in incremental periods not to exceed five years (and preferably more frequently) for purposes of charter renewal.
- Charters should be revoked or not renewed if a school repeatedly or egregiously
 - Failed to meet content standards, pupil performance standards, or school climate standards identified in the charter contract.
 - Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.
 - Violated any provision of state or federal law from which the charter school was not exempt.
 - Discriminated against students based on characteristics such as family economic circumstances, disability, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.
 - Used curriculum or instruction that failed to maintain the separation of church and state.
 - Failed to admit prospective students periodically throughout the year as space became available.
 - Failed to enforce truancy laws.
- Employees should have the right to organize unions at charter schools.
- The authority for approving and renewing charters should reside exclusively in the local school board.
- Local voters should be able through referendum to request their school board to establish a charter school.
- There should be adequate provisions for education of the public and participation in the authorizer's decision-making process.
- If the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) or a body appointed by ISBE, such as the State Charter School Commission, has the power to reverse a decision by a local school board, local voters should be able through referendum to override the decision of ISBE or the appointed commission.
- There needs to be good communication among all public schools regarding effective innovations.

LWVIL has identified the following areas of concern about charter schools:

1) Financial impact on school districts. For example,

- Charters can place financial pressure on districts by drawing money out of the traditional public schools.
- When a student transfers between traditional public and charter schools, funding for that pupil should be prorated and transferred in a timely fashion.
- All property, equipment, and materials purchased by a charter school with public dollars should be surrendered to the local district if the school closes for any reason.

2) Privatization and profit-making. LWVIL opposes the presence of private, for-profit companies in the governance of public education. Subcontracting most of the management of a school to a for-profit organization should be prohibited.

3) Lack of transparency. Like other public schools, charter schools should be subject to disclosure of

- Potential conflicts of interest of members of the governing board
- Sources of revenue
- Salaries and benefit packages

- The identity of the owner of any property and buildings
- Admission processes

4) Virtual education (provided by computers off-site, with students spending little if any time in a brick-and-mortar school). Virtual education is not appropriate for elementary-aged students except in rare circumstances. Funding for virtual schools should be based on actual costs, rather than the same level of funding provided to other charter schools.

Background

League support for equal educational opportunity is a national position that is now embodied in League principles. Because education is a responsibility of the states, however, LWWIL and many other state Leagues have adopted positions on the equitable distribution of state resources for public schools.

2008–2009

The state's fiscal problems were magnified by the national recession.

2013–2015

Funding decreased, with an 89% proration of the appropriation.

- FY2015: 64.2% of IL districts are in deficit spending mode.
- FY2014: 42.4% were in deficit spending
- In Chicago, traditional public schools lost \$72M in funding, with a corresponding rise in funding to public charter schools

LWWIL Action

1973–1975

A comprehensive new study to examine more equitable ways to raise and distribute money for schools was authorized. The position adopted in 1975 supported the resource equalizer formula concept.

1983–1985

League efforts were directed toward re-educating members about school finance so they could serve as community resource people and marshaling citizen input into the school reform movement. 1985 Convention delegates adopted position for full funding of mandated programs and development of a school funding system that was equitable and adequate for all schools in Illinois.

1985–1989

LWWIL concentrated efforts to ensure that education was given the financial resources to implement the 1985 education reforms. When it became obvious that there was no hope of passing an increase in the income tax, the League worked for passage of an increased cigarette tax.

1987–1989

During this biennium, LWWIL concentrated efforts on convincing the General Assembly that an income tax increase was necessary if the education reforms (particularly for high-risk pre-schoolers) and formula revisions were to be funded.

1990

With state funding of schools at less than 51%, League joined the Coalition for Educational Rights in an unsuccessful lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Illinois' school funding system. LWWIL worked for school funding largely through the Coalition, which chaired from December 1994 to June 1996, until it dissolved in late 1997.

1991–1993

Through an action campaign adopted at the 1991 state Convention, local Leagues promoted public understanding of school finance issues and the need for school funding reform. LWWIL also monitored and provided testimony to the Legislative Task Force on School Finance.

In 1992, LWVIL actively supported an amendment to the education article of the Illinois Constitution, intended to strengthen the constitutional requirement for an adequate and equitable state school funding system.

Although passed by the legislature, the measure fell short of passage in November.

In spring 1993, LWVIL supported unsuccessful legislation that embodied the Legislative Task Force recommendations.

1993 was also when LWVIL embarked on a tax reform action focus centered on a campaign for a graduated income tax. (See Fiscal Policy sections.)

1995

LWVIL Convention approved formation of a Working Committee on State Tax and School Funding Reform to direct efforts in these areas.

1996 - 1997

LWVIL testified before the Governor's Commission on Education funding and, with coalition partners, supported legislation stemming from the Commission's recommendations. The recommendations, including a personal income tax increase, failed in both the 1996 and 1997 spring sessions.

LWVIL did not take a position on a bill passed in December 1997 that raised an additional \$485 million for education from increased taxes on cigarettes, telephone calls, and riverboat gambling. The League did, however, issue a statement opposing gambling as a solution to Illinois' fiscal problems. (See State Fiscal Policy.)

1999

Since 1999, LWVIL representatives have met with and advocated for recommendations of the Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB) which sets minimum levels for general state aid payments to schools.

Also in 1999, several tuition tax credit bills were introduced in the General Assembly. LWVIL unsuccessfully opposed the Educational Expenses Tax Reform Act, providing an annual state income tax credit for "qualified educational expenses". LWVIL viewed the threshold as too high to be met by the vast majority of parents of public school children and, therefore, considered the legislation as a benefit to parents of private school students.

2000

The General Assembly attempted to pass the Illinois budget with a provision to funnel public funds to nonpublic schools. The initiative was not included in the final budget after an intense lobby effort by the League and Illinois Federation of Teachers and Illinois Education Association.

1999–2001

Charter Schools Study

1999 LWVIL Convention delegates adopted the study focusing on advantages and disadvantages of charters, current and potential funding sources, impact on local school districts, and educational implementation of charters. The Charter School position was approved by the LWVIL Board in 2001.

2001–2009

Increases for school funding remained an important issue as local Leagues educated themselves and the public about school funding via public meetings with Ralph Martire from the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability. LWVIL was also an active participant in coalitions sharing a common interest in reforming Illinois' school finance system such as the Better Funding for Better Schools and the Responsible Budget Coalition.

2008

A state-wide committee of League members was formed to devise strategies to education League members on the issues of school funding reform in order to expand our grassroots effort.

2003–2019

Action focus adopted at LWVIL Conventions

At each convention, delegates included State Fiscal Policy and School Funding on the list of Action Foci. This led to continued public education and lobbying on school funding reform and fiscal policy issues.

2009

LWVIL passed a Will of Convention to send a letter to the Governor and the General Assembly urging them to pass a fair and equitable income tax, restore Illinois to fiscal health in an accountable and transparent manner.

2009–2011

Responsible Budget Coalition

In the face of a growing state deficit, delayed payments, and budget cuts, League joined the RBC to support and lobby for a tax increase and responsible budget that would protect essential services. In January, 2010, a temporary tax increase which would sunset in 2014 was passed.,

Corporate tax breaks

During the 2011 Veto Session, significant tax breaks were given to Sears and the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and its subsidiaries when the companies threatened to leave the state. The League opposed these tax breaks as they endangered funding for schools and other essential services. The revenues lost would have a greater negative impact on essential services than the benefits from increased EITC and personal exemption.

School Vouchers and Charter Schools

In 2010 and 2011 LWVIL opposed bills that would fund pilot voucher programs in Chicago. Neither bill passed. Another bill to establish a task force to study further expansion of vouchers statewide drew interest but no action in the General Assembly.

- LWVIL sent a letter in opposition to a bill establishing a state commission to charter new charter schools without local district approval and removing ISBE oversight. This bill passed.
- A TFA asked that League members support - with reservations - a bill providing an alternative to the Chicago pilot voucher plan by allowing up to 5 charter schools to be created to serve the same population of students in failing or over-crowded schools. It passed.

In 2011, LWVIL issued the following TFAs:

- opposing the creation of a charter school commission- it was passed
- opposing a bill which would create vouchers –it was defeated.

In 2012, LWVIL issued the following TFAs

- opposing asking districts to assume a higher percentage of the costs of charter schools. The bill was defeated.
- opposing a bill making the Charter School Commission autonomous, with no operational oversight. Unfortunately, the bill passed.

Subsequently, when an issues specialist observed a meeting of the Commission, we learned from the Executive Director the Commission receives large amounts of private funding.

LWVIL also sent a letter to Greg Richmond, chair of the charter school commission, seeking clarification on the role of the commission and its goals.

2011–2013

Legislation of note focused on **school consolidation, school vouchers, funding for the Regional Offices of Education, PTELL (Tax Cap) legislation** which would have had a negative effect on local funding, **shifting pension costs** to local school districts. These show a disturbing trend to cost shifting from the state to local districts, accentuating inequities between districts. **All were opposed by LWVIL.**

In 2012, the League undertook a statewide project to pass a constitutional amendment which allows a graduated rate income tax. The action focus was readopted at the convention in 2013. LWVIL collaborated with A Better Illinois, which is under the auspices of the Responsible Budget Coalition. In 2013, LWVIL

issued a Call to Action, asking local Leagues to visit legislators, send a letter to the editor and/or an editorial approved by the LWVIL president, make phone calls, and send emails and postcards in support of a graduated rate tax. The League also created a Speakers Bureau and a set of resources, including power points and brochures.

In 2013, the League submitted a letter to the Illinois Charter School Commission outlining concern and opposition to virtual charter schools.

Two months later, the Legislature called for a moratorium on virtual charters so that the issue could be studied.

In 2013, LWVIL Recognizing increased proliferation of charter schools as well as an increase in educational research analyzing them since 2001, convention delegates adopted a study updating the position. The updated Charter School position was approved by the LWVIL Board in 2015.

2014

The League completed Witness Slips supporting the timely transfer of funds between a charter school and a traditional public school, opposing a reduced property tax rate for dual taxing districts.

An advisory committee on Education Funding delivered its report in 2014. Subsequently, major legislation was proposed to make school funding more equitable. Unfortunately, in the absence of additional funding, the bills proposed would have simply created new winners and losers.

LWVIL also created a fact sheet, completed a Witness Slip and issued a TFA opposing a bill that was intended to provide more equitable funding for schools but used a faulty formula and failed to provide for funding.

In response to a Voice of the People submitted to the Chicago Tribune by Illinois State Senator Kwame Raoul (D-13), LWVIL President Mary Kubasak sent Mr. Raoul a letter reaffirming LWVIL's position opposing proposals that would provide public funds for private schools

A witness slip was filed in opposition to a bill which would have reduced property tax rates for dual taxing districts.

LWVIL sent a letter to the Illinois State Board of Education supporting their efforts to seek a waiver from No Child Left Behind mandates.

2015

LWVIL again supported legislation that would have stopped the Charter School Commission from overriding decisions of local school boards. The bill became stuck in committee.

The League filed a Witness slip and issued a TFA supporting legislation to require charters to meet the same non-curricular health and safety standards as traditional public schools. This became law.

Bills designed to provide equitable funding were stuck in committee..

LWVIL issued witness slips and a TFA supporting bills which would require civic education in high school,

General Legislative Trends

- Despite the two year state budget impasse, education was one of the few discretionary line items in the budget with continued funding in both FY 16 and FY 17. Nevertheless, the state was \$1 billion behind in mandated grant payments
- Numerous school districts in the state joined together to sue the Governor and ISBE, alleging that the state had violated constitutional rights to state funding of learning standards, to equal protection, and to due process.
- Every year there have been proposals to freeze property taxes. In 2017, the governor recommended a permanent property tax freeze as part of his bargain to sign a budget. School district personnel have indicated extreme concern.
- An advisory committee was appointed by the Governor to examine school funding reform. In February, 2017, it reported that an evidence-based funding model has promise for more equitable

funding. HB 2808 (Davis), and SB 1124 SAM 1 (Barickman) address the need for an evidenced based funding model.

After years of advocacy for adequate and equitable school funding in the state, a bill was passed which has the potential for equitable funding. Whether funding will be adequate will depend on revenue bills in the coming years.

However, passing a bill for Evidence-based funding came at a price – a compromise bill, which LWVIL opposed, permits tax credits for donations to private school scholarships while providing for evidence-based funding.

In 2017, funding of 80% of school districts in Illinois was below adequacy, according to Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) data interpretations of the new evidence-based model. ISBE estimated that in the next 10 years, a total of \$6.5 Billion will be needed to bring all districts to adequacy.

A survey from the Illinois State Board of Education reports that of the 1,006 unfilled teacher positions in the state, 74% are in majority-minority school districts while 81% are in districts where the majority of students are low-income.

TFA, video, Letters to editors, etc. regarding the need to resolve the budget impasse in order to achieve adequate funding

2016

- TFA opposing the plan to use special education funds to equalize educational funding – the plan was dropped
- Letter to Representative Mayfield opposing HB4424 – mandatory retention for third graders not reading at grade level by the end of the year.
- Witness slip with written testimony plus letters to Senator Cullerton and Rep. Flynn Currie opposing HB4263, property tax cap. Stalled in committee.
- Letters to Governor and to ISBE opposing the use of federal grant funds to open 48 additional charter schools. The funds were accepted for that purpose.
- TFA supporting including educators on the ISBE Board. Did not pass.
- TFA opposing increasing the length of time for charter school renewals from 5-10 years. The bill was signed into law
- TFA supporting Constitutional Amendment for graduated rate income tax. Did not pass.
- TFA opposing a freeze on property taxes. Did not pass.
- Witness slip supporting preventing Charter School Commission from overriding district decision. Did not pass
- TFA supporting passing a fully-funded state budget by June 30. Instead, a six-month stop-gap budget was passed

2017

Opposed voucher schools through a letter and witness slips

- TFA supporting preventing the Charter School Commission from reversing local school board decisions.
- TFA supporting Civic Education in Middle School
- TFA supporting preventing new charter schools from being approved in neighborhoods where traditional public schools were closed recently
- TFA supporting preventing the misuse of federal funds designed for the classroom.

2018-2019

Issues identified by the Illinois State Board of Education:

- Fewer than one quarter of children in Illinois were prepared for kindergarten
- ISBE has also reported teacher shortages – particularly in downstate districts. This could be related to the need for higher minimum salaries. A bill raising the minimum starting salary for teachers to \$40,000 by 2023/2024 was passed.

Successful TFAs in 2018/19:

- League members asked their school boards to instruct their delegates at the Illinois Association of School Boards Conference in 2018 to oppose a resolution on Arming Teachers.
- A bill passed which requires civic education in the middle school.
- A bill was passed which abolishes the Charter School Commission and transfers authorization of the commission's nine charter schools and appeals of charter non-renewals to the Illinois State Board of Education. Local district decisions to deny a charter are now appealable to state court.
- A bill was passed which – if the public agrees in November, 2020 – would amend the state constitution to permit a graduated rate income tax

2020

Opposed bill to cut property taxes. The bill did not advance when the General Assembly did not meet due to COVID.

2021

An Omnibus bill designed to promote equity in education was proposed by the Black Caucus and was passed into law. The League was not able to take a stance because 1) many provisions were not addressed by our positions and 2) the wording of the bill was introduced at the last minute during the lame duck session.

The League filed witness slips supporting evaluating bias in the curriculum and taxing ammunition sales to fund trauma responses in schools. We opposed a bill which would have increased funding for School Resource Officers, who are sworn law enforcement personnel assigned to work in a school. These did not advance

LWVIL supported a bill that updates the sex education curriculum K-12 to include the diversity of gender and sexual orientations, the importance of consent, identifying signs of abusive romantic relationships, gender identity, and different types of families. It passed into law.

Our major focus was on a successful effort to restore Evidence Based Funding in the budget in 2021 after it was omitted in 2020.

(See also LWVUS Social Policy positions pertaining to Equality of Opportunity, and LWVUS Impact on Issues.)

State Fiscal Policies

1977, 1980, 1981,
modified 1987, revised 1994

LWVIL Position

LWVIL supports a diversified revenue system which principally relies on a combination of broad-based taxes and user fees, is equitable, progressive, stable, responsive and simple.

Criteria: LWVIL supports a state revenue system which overall is based on the following criteria:

1. Equity - Imposes similar amounts of tax on taxpayers in like circumstances.
2. Progressivity - Is based on ability to pay so that those with greater ability pay a greater percentage of their income.
3. Stability - Provides a stable source of revenue.
4. Responsiveness - Is able to capture and reflect long-term economic growth.
5. Simplicity - Is easy and efficient to administer and is understandable to the taxpayer.

Income Tax: LWVIL supports a progressive income tax with a graduated rate schedule. Until the Illinois Constitution is amended to allow graduated rates, the flat rate income tax should be made more progressive.

Sales Tax: LWVIL supports a broad-based sales tax with exemptions for food and medicines to reduce the impact on low-income persons.

Property Tax: LWWIL supports the use of the property tax for partially financing education and local government and services. We support uniform, efficient and professional tax assessment procedures.

User Fees: LWWIL supports user fees structured and levied with a sensitivity to low-income persons.

Deductions, Exemptions and Credits: LWWIL supports achieving policy goals through direct expenditures rather than deductions, exemptions and credits. If deductions, exemptions and credits are used, they should:

1. decrease the tax burden on lower income persons and further overall progressivity.
2. be periodically reviewed to justify continuation.
3. be the most efficient means of achieving their intended purpose.

Local Implications: Distribution of state revenues to local government is an appropriate source of local revenue. LWWIL opposes statutory limits on local government's ability to raise taxes and spend revenue. Local services mandated by the State should have state appropriations linked to the mandate.

Background

Several positions on **taxation and assessment** were developed through land use and tax structure studies during the 1970's and combined into one item in 1977. The 1979 LWWIL Convention adopted a comprehensive study of **financing state and local government** that included revenue sources, expenditure procedures and limitations on taxing and spending. Partial consensus was reached in 1980 on **tax and spending limitations**.

The League supported a graduated income tax at the time of the 1970 Constitutional Convention. A political compromise, however, resulted in the approval of a **flat rate income tax**. LWWIL has worked to improve the flat rate tax to make it more progressive by urging that the personal exemption and the earned income credit be increased. (See LWWIL Constitutional Implementation and Amendments.)

LWWIL has a Speakers Bureau to promote knowledge of the issue and build support for changing the Illinois Constitution to allow for a graduated rate income tax. Legislation to put the question on the ballot was supported by LWWIL. In May 2019, the General Assembly voted to put the question to the voters at the November 2020 General Election.

A comprehensive study of the **revenue system** began in 1980. The state board determined that the local League participation (less than 60%) in the consensus process was not an adequate basis for developing a state position. However, there was substantial agreement among the participating Leagues and the state board recommended to the 1981 LWWIL Convention that individual Leagues concur with the position statement. The convention adopted the recommendation, and concurrence was reached in the fall of 1981.

The 1991 LWWIL Convention adopted an action focus on **fair and adequate school funding**. Implicit in this item was a commitment to work for a **constitutional amendment for a graduated income tax** as the most equitable means of securing the revenues needed to end the disparity in educational opportunity for Illinois children.

In 1993, the state board appointed a committee to review the LWWIL Fiscal Policy position. The 1994 Interim Council approved a revised position.

The 1993 LWWIL Convention adopted an action campaign to **reform the state's tax system**, including an initial focus to work for a constitutional amendment for a graduated income tax as a foundation for a more productive tax structure.

The 1995 LWWIL Convention approved the formation of a **Working Committee on State Tax and School Funding Reform**, reflecting a strong commitment to continued League activity in these areas and the recognition that long-term solutions for school funding will require reform of the state's tax system.

The General Assembly adjourned on May 31, 2017 without a budget agreement. In July, the General Assembly passed a budget and a permanent increase in the income tax. Governor Rauner vetoed the budget bill and the tax increase. The General Assembly overrode the vetoes. The budget agreement helped the state avoid receiving junk bond status from the bond rating agencies. However, the budget did not have

sufficient revenues to pay for expenditures or to pay down the \$16 Billion backlog of unpaid bills. The General Assembly also passed a bill allowing the issuance of \$6 Billion in bonds to pay some of the backlog of unpaid bills.

2017–2019

After the actions taken in July 2017, the state had a budget for FY 2018 and FY 2019 and some additional revenue. It was able to pay some old bills. It avoided junk bond status. But it did not have enough money to repair the damage done during more than two years without a budget and without the revenues which were lost when the temporary income tax of 2011 was allowed to lapse. Damages included:

- The backlog of unpaid bills increased to \$16 Billion.
- The cost of debt service (interest payments) increased.
- Federal funds could not be dispersed without a budget.
- Social service and health providers were forced to cut staff and services.
- Intended recipients of these services were under-served or lost services.
- School districts were covered by a partial budget for General State Aid. Some of these payments were late. Payments for categorical spending such as special education and transportation were delayed or not made. School districts had to find other sources of funds or make cuts.
- Pensions were not fully funded and the unfunded liability grew.
- Higher education sustained severe cuts. Students left Illinois.

LWVIL Action

A number of League positions have been enacted into law. In 1979, legislation was enacted to require training in assessment practices and procedures for **township assessors** and to establish **multi-township assessment districts** with a minimum population of 1,000 by January 1981. **Property tax bills** must now provide more information, and better citizen awareness of the appeals process have resulted in many more challenges to inequitable assessments.

During 1982–83, the State's ability to adequately fund services was eroded by recession, federal funding decreases and tax relief legislation. The League worked to increase awareness of the **State's financial dilemma and to increase the state income tax**. In 1983, a temporary 18-month increase in the income tax was enacted. Attempts to secure a permanent increase were futile. The League supported a 5% tax on interstate telecommunications and an increase in the cigarette tax to fund education in 1985.

In 1986, the financial condition of the State of Illinois became substantially worse. Increases in public aid grants were again vetoed, and the 1985 Education Reforms were not adequately funded. From 1986 through 1997, a top League priority was support for a **state income tax increase** to provide adequate funding for education and human services. The League formed **CARE for Illinois**, a coalition of over 100 organizations, and achieved partial success with the 1989 temporary income tax surcharge that was made permanent in two stages in 1991 and 1993.

The League continues to support increasing the amount of the personal exemption to reduce the burden on low-income families. LWVIL supported a sunset measure passed in 1994 for newly created exemptions, credits and deductions. The League has continued to oppose additional income tax exemptions and deductions that would further erode state revenue. LWVIL opposed legislation enacted in 1991 to cap local property taxes for the collar counties and similar legislation enacted in 1995 for Cook County.

In the spring of 1991, the League began to promote discussion of a constitutional amendment for a graduated income tax as the best long-term solution to the State's persistent financial problems leading to the formation of Progress Illinois in 1993. This was a statewide coalition of organizations chaired by the League, that spearheaded a campaign for a graduated income tax constitutional amendment on the November 1994 ballot. LWVIL and local Leagues mounted an extensive public education and lobbying campaign to generate support. Resolutions proposing a constitutional amendment were introduced in both houses in the Spring 1993 legislative session but election year politics prevented the amendment from being called for a vote.

LWVIL continued to work for progressive tax reform both in the context of its school funding efforts and in its work with Progress Illinois. As part of its public education and advocacy effort, the coalition commissioned two significant research projects from the University of Illinois Institute of Government and

Public Affairs: (1) an analysis of Illinois' structural revenue deficit and (2) the development of computer models of Illinois' individual income and general sales taxes to analyze the impact of major tax reform proposals on the burden on taxpayers at different income levels and on revenue growth. Lawmakers, legislative staffs and others who analyze and evaluate both existing tax policies and a number of revenue proposals have used the models.

During the school funding debate in the spring 1997 legislative session, the League supported the Governor's failed call for an income tax increase and tried to insert an increase in the personal exemption in the revenue package. (See LWWIL Schools position.) At the end of the spring 1998 legislative session, the General Assembly enacted a small, phased-in increase of the personal exemption.

The League opposed legislation passed in 1998 that allows income from multi-state corporations to be apportioned to Illinois by the sales factor. This narrowed the corporate tax base, at a time when the State has no long-term school funding solutions.

In June 2000, League spoke against the six-month suspension of the Illinois gas tax, stating that the projected 2% across the board reduction in state budgets would adversely affect Illinois social services.

In 2001, LWWUS and LWWIL joined the "First Things First" coalition in advocating that the federal government put "first things first" and spend revenues on necessary government programs that the League supports, rather than tax cuts. League testified at a rally on April 11, 2002 and participated in grassroots lobbying to oppose the tax cuts.

At the 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015 LWWIL Conventions, League members voted to adopt an action focus on State Fiscal Policy and School Funding for the following two years. To carry out this action focus, LWWIL and local Leagues attended LWWIL Issues Briefings, Lobby Days, and meetings with legislators on the subject. Local Leagues held public forums to educate League members, legislators, and the public on school funding and fiscal policy issues. League members attended rallies in Springfield, wrote letters and emails, and made phone calls to legislators to urge the governor and legislators to pass legislation which would increase state spending on schools and social services and would increase state revenues by raising the income tax, broadening the sales tax, and providing property tax relief.

The 2007-2009 Biennium was a grim time to advocate for change in the way that the state of Illinois raised revenues. Former Governor Blagojevich deadlocked with the General Assembly and very little was accomplished. Governor Quinn and the General Assembly continued the disagreement over how to pay for government and repair the structural deficit. The state continued to ration available funds by delaying payments to schools and social service providers and by postponing payments to the state pension systems. A national recession magnified the state's fiscal problems.

2009-2011

In 2009, A Will of Convention directed the Board of Directors to call for the Illinois Governor and the General Assembly to restore the state's fiscal health and to provide for Illinois' future.

LWWIL worked with the Better Funding for Better Schools Coalition to encourage the governor and the General Assembly to change the way the state raises revenues and to spend more money on public schools. In 2009, HB 174 was introduced and the Responsible Budget Coalition, which LWWIL joined, was formed to promote its passage. The RBC later amended its stance to support an HB 174-like bill in the hopes that the legislature could agree on a package without the confines of a particular bill. HB 174 passed the Senate in 2010 but did not pass the House.

2011

The General Assembly successfully passed an income tax increase on a strictly partisan vote which raised the personal income tax from 3% to 5% and corporate tax from 4.8% to 7%. The tax increase was temporary, and in January, 2015, the personal income tax rate dropped to 3.75%, and the tax on corporations dropped to 5.25%. The 2011 legislation did not include expansion of the sales tax or expansion of the Earned Income Tax credit to protect low and moderate income families, changes which the League had promoted.

The Illinois fiscal situation was grim. While Federal stimulus funds initially kept schools and services afloat, when they ended in December, 2010, the state was unable to make up the difference. Despite the additional

\$7B expected from the income tax hike, Illinois began FY 2012 with an estimated deficit of \$9 B. Although the state eventually paid its outstanding bills from FY 2009 and 2010, late payments continued. As a member of the Responsible Budget Coalition, LWVIL supported “debt restructuring”— using some of the new tax revenue to back a bond issuance so that the state can back outstanding bills owed to state and local agencies. In addition, LWVIL supported decoupling from the enhanced Federal depreciation program and using the Senate’s revenue estimate as the basis for the FY 2012 budget to help preserve some of the services scheduled to be cut.

2011–2013

The economy continued to stagnate after the end of the “Great Recession”. State revenues improved because of a temporary tax increase but did not get a boost from an improving economy. The bill for twenty years of deferred pension payments came due and the General Assembly and governor were forced to grapple with the problem. The government continued to face billions in unpaid bills. Spending cuts were forced on school districts and social service and health care providers.

LWVIL continued to work with the Responsible Budget Coalition on ways to improve the state’s revenues. RBC began a campaign called “A Better Illinois” to get the General Assembly to place the question of allowing Illinois to have a graduated rate income tax (GRIT) on the ballot in the November 2014 General Election. LWVIL joined this effort and established a Speakers Bureau to educate citizens on this issue.

To support the work of the Responsible Budget Coalition and further advocate on our own for the needed tax increase, LWVIL asked local Leagues statewide to participate in a simple survey of schools, human service providers, and others who depend on state funding for all or part of their funds to discover the impact on these organizations and their ability to serve their clientele. Each League was then asked to report their findings to their communities, via forum, editorial board meeting, or other method. Numerous Leagues and their results and follow up action was written into a final report. The Leagues who participated did a remarkable job and should be credited with raising the public’s awareness of the difficulties faced in their communities.

2013–2015

During FY 2014 and the first half of FY 2015, the State of Illinois collected income taxes at the higher “temporary rate”. Approximately 90% of the revenues from the temporary income tax increase were used to pay pension obligations which take \$1 out of every \$4 that the state spends from its General Fund. Some of the new money went to reduce the backlog of old bills, and as a result the budget deficit shrank from \$8 billion to \$6 billion. Important programs including pre-school, K-12, higher education, and health and human services did not see much of the new money. The problem of adequately funding pension programs continued, in part because the pension funds’ investments had lost so much value during the economic downturn, and in part because of years of inadequate funding.

In January, 2015, the income tax rates dropped with the result that the FY2015 budget did not have enough money to fund some programs for the entire year. Governor Rauner and the General Assembly were forced to deal with this problem, and they chose to cut programs and spend some unanticipated income tax revenues to get through FY2015. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the Illinois Constitution prohibited changes to state employee pensions and voided a prior “pension reform” law that was supposed to save money for the state to use elsewhere in the budget. The Governor and the General Assembly were unable to agree on a budget for FY 2016.

The League worked to educate its members and the public about these complicated issues, and it advocated for adequate revenues for education and health and human services. The state’s fiscal problems were the subject of a plenary session at the 2015 Issues Briefing, several Time for Action requests, and reports in the E-News. LWVIL is a member of the Responsible Budget Coalition, which also advocates for adequate revenues for education and health and human services.

2015–2017

The Governor and the General Assembly could not agree on budgets for FY2016 and FY2017. Partial agreements funded elementary and secondary education. Court decrees allowed the State to pay salaries for state employees and some social services. Some programs were funded in response to crises. The state’s backlog of unpaid bills grew from \$6 Billion to \$15 Billion. Social service agencies were paid late or not at all.

Some agencies were forced to lay off staff and cut programs. Some had to close. Medical bills for state employees were delayed and the backlog of payments to providers grew to \$5 Billion. Community colleges and state universities were not included in the partial budgets, and received emergency payments in smaller than usual amounts. They were left with large holes in their budgets. Students did not receive MAP grants. Many students chose to leave for other states to continue their educations.

The Spring Session of the General Assembly ended on May 31, 2017 without a budget agreement. In July, the General Assembly reached agreement on a budget and a permanent increase in the income tax. The Governor vetoed the budget and tax increase. The General Assembly overrode the veto. The budget agreement was sufficient for the state to avoid receiving junk bond status by the bond rating agencies. The budget does not have enough revenues to pay for the expenditures in it. Also, the budget does not have sufficient revenues to begin paying down the backlog of unpaid bills..

During all of this time, the League worked to educate its members and the public about these complicated issues. The League advocated for adequate revenues for the state, for education and for health and human services. The state's fiscal problems were the subject of plenary sessions at Issues Briefings, Time for Action requests, questions for legislators at legislative interviews and articles in the E-News. League members did their part and communicated with their elected officials. And the League worked in coalition with the Responsible Budget Coalition, which also advocates for adequate revenues for education and health and human services.

2017-19

LWVIL worked with the Responsible Budget Coalition (RBC) to get the constitutional question, called the **Fair Tax**, on the ballot in the November 2020 General Election.

The State of Illinois has had a structural deficit for many years, that is, its systems for collecting revenues do not keep up with rising costs and spending needs. LWVIL has continued to advocate for the state to raise revenues to meet these needs and improvements. LWVIL works to educate its members and the public about these complicated issues, including education and health and human services. LWVIL educates its members at the annual Issues Briefing, LWVIL state conventions, in Time For Action emails and reports in the E-News. Local Leagues hold meetings to educate the public on these issues. And LWVIL works with coalitions, including the Responsible Budget Coalition.

2019-2021

LWVIL served on the ballot committee for the Vote Yes for Fair Tax campaign, and League members throughout the state worked very hard throughout the pandemic writing letters, giving virtual presentations, and contacting voters, but the November 2020 referendum to change the Illinois constitution to allow a graduated rate income tax was not passed by the voters.

LWVIL worked with the Responsible Budget Coalition's 300 partner organizations to advocate for additional revenue sources in the FY22 budget, including closing corporate tax loopholes, with some success.

The federal government provided \$8.1 billion for the state in Covid relief funding, to be spent within the next 4 years. This federal aid made it possible to pass a balanced FY22 budget while funding the Evidence-Based Education Model increases., increasing funding for healthcare, affordable housing, and violence prevention, paying against borrowing early, and reducing the state's unpaid bill backlog so that bills are paid within 30 days. Once the federal funds are spent, however, the state's structural deficit will threaten funding for education and human services until a new revenue structure is enacted, possibly including another attempt to pass a graduated-rate tax constitutional amendment.

Gambling

1999 - Issued by the LWVIL Board of Directors

For 20 years, the League, based on our State Fiscal Policy position, has opposed gambling and expansions of gambling as a solution to Illinois' fiscal problems. Gambling distracts attention from the real fiscal problems that Illinois must address which include:

1. A revenue system that is outmoded and structurally flawed because it grows more slowly than the economy and is therefore unable to provide stable funding for state programs and services from one year to the next and
2. A tax structure that unfairly burdens the poor.

The League opposes gambling for the following reasons:

- Gambling revenue is only a small slice of the state revenue pie.
- Gambling revenue has low natural growth potential. It does not contribute to the ability of the state revenue system to capture and reflect long-term economic growth or to provide stable funding for state services and programs.
- Gambling is a regressive approach to raising revenue because it disproportionately impacts those with lower incomes, and does not improve the overall progressivity of Illinois' revenue system.
- Gambling and its various expansions give lawmakers the appearance of working to solve Illinois' fiscal problems but only provide temporary stop-gap measures and an excuse for avoiding long term solutions to Illinois' deteriorating fiscal health.

Action Guidelines For Local Leagues

The strength and integrity of all League action is based on the decisions of informed members. When a position is reached, the League speaks with one voice, the voice of a substantial majority, and the minority abides by that decision.

Leagues may, of course, decline to take action at any governmental level and maintain a public silence. But a League may not take action in opposition to official League positions.

Members may act as individuals in support of or opposition to League positions, but they must make it clear that they are acting on their own behalf and not on behalf of the League unless authorized by the appropriate board to represent the League.

The most effective action occurs when Leagues act at whatever level of government is most appropriate. For example, on a statewide issue, the most effective action occurs when local Leagues, acting in concert, lobby their own state legislators. Because legislators are most responsive to their own constituents, it is rarely effective for a local League to lobby a legislator representing a different area. For this reason, one of the most important criteria in adopting a study is whether the issue can best be addressed at the level of League that would undertake the study.

To ensure agreement on the interpretation of positions, to coordinate activities of the different levels of the League, and to enhance the effectiveness of League action campaigns, local Leagues are encouraged to consult with the state board about their action plans.

Consultation is **required** whenever the intended action would affect the jurisdiction of other Leagues and/or a local League wishes to act at the state or national level on an issue which has not been the subject of a state or national call to action.

Action at the Local Level

The decision to take action which will affect only your community rests with your local league board.

Local Position

In deciding to take action based on a local position, the board will want to consider:
whether the contemplated action falls within the relevant position
whether your members understand and support the action
whether the action would be effective in your community

State or National Position

Local Leagues are encouraged to take action in their communities based directly on positions from other levels of League. Consultation with a board member from that League level may be helpful in planning action strategy.

Involvement in the Absence of a League Position

Issues can arise quickly in a community where League input would be helpful but a lengthy study process leading to a local position is not feasible and there is no applicable position at another level of League. There are a number of ways that local Leagues can help resolve such issues and play a dynamic, visible role in the community. For example, they may:

- bring diverse constituencies together to define the problem and facilitate a common solution
- sponsor public hearings
- provide objective research and education on the community issue
- sponsor educational forums

When the League is involved in a community issue without the basis of a formal position, it is critical that the League representatives remain objective and neutral. The League's role is to help the community reach consensus or air differing viewpoints in a calm, objective atmosphere.

Action at the Regional Level

Action that would affect the jurisdiction of more than one League **requires consultation** with the boards of the other Leagues in the area involved.

The procedure to be followed will depend on the complexity of the issue and the number of Leagues involved. If only two or three Leagues are affected, all should agree (or have no objection) to the plan of action. If more than three Leagues are involved, there should be consensus on the contemplated action. You may contact a member of the state or ILO board for guidance.

Action at the State Level

Action that would involve contact with state government officials **requires approval** by the state board.

If your League is contemplating state-level action that has not been requested by the LWVIL board, please contact the LWVIL Issues and Action Vice President.

Legislation Affecting Only the Jurisdiction(s) of the League Wishing to Act

The contemplated action may be based on positions from any League level and, as a general rule, will be given clearance by the state board. Consultation is needed, however, not only to keep the state board informed about all state-level advocacy but also to ensure that there is no conflict with other LWVIL action and to ensure that the action proposed is based on complete and current information.

For example, in the course of a day a bill may be amended one or more times, and the League position may change accordingly. If action is approved, the local League may contact only its own legislators unless it has requested and received permission from other Leagues to lobby their legislators. Such was the case in 1993, when the DuPage County ILO successfully sought approval to lobby all state legislators on legislation relating to the DuPage County Airport Authority.

Legislation Affecting Jurisdictions Beyond Those of the League Wishing to Act

If the basis for the contemplated action is a state or national position, the state board will evaluate the proposed action in the context of its legislative priorities. Clearance will be given if there is no conflict with other LWVIL action.

If the basis for the contemplated action is a local position, the state board will exercise extreme care in determining whether to approve such action. While using a local position as the basis for state-level action does not provide the most effective method for action and should not circumvent the state program planning process (through which changes to current state positions or new study items may be proposed), there are occasional circumstances when a local League may wish to pursue such action.

In such cases, the local League will be asked to prepare a request for permission to act to be distributed to all affected Leagues. The request should include a description of the type, goals, impact and time frame of the contemplated action, including which legislators the League proposes to lobby, and to the greatest extent possible, the general effect of the proposed action on other local Leagues. The LWWIL Issues and Action Vice President will review the request prior to distribution. The state board will evaluate the responses of the local Leagues and determine whether to grant permission to act. Points the board will consider include:

- Is the legislation permissive or binding?
- What are the geographic impact, level and visibility of the contemplated action?
- Is the issue divisive at any level?
- Is there conflict with any local, ILO, or state League position?
- Do any local Leagues object to the proposed action and why?

Action at the National Level

Action that would involve contact with government officials at the national level **requires approval** by the national League.

If your League is contemplating action at the federal level that has not been requested by the national board, you must clear your plans with LWWUS. You may call the LWWUS office directly. If you have questions, you may contact the appropriate state legislative/issue specialist or the LWWIL Issues and Action Vice President for guidance.

The State and Local League Request Form for Federal Issues/ League of Women Voters is at <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/other-issues-tools/federal-action-request-form>