



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS OF VIRGINIA**

**A Summary of LWV-VA Position
Statements [document format]
Updated Spring 2021**

Positions-In-Brief

**Full wording of positions with history is contained in *LWV-VA Positioned for Action*,
Posted on the LWV-VA website: www.lwv-va.org**

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The purpose of the League of Women Voters of Virginia is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government, and influence public policy through education and advocacy. While the League acts on selected government issues, based on positions reached after study and member agreement, it is strictly nonpartisan—it neither supports nor opposes political parties or candidates for public office.

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

- competent personnel with clear responsibilities,
- coordination among agencies and levels of government,
- adequate financing,
- effective enforcement, and
- well-defined channels for citizen input and review.

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GOVERNMENT

DELEGATION OF POWER

Support for a balanced partnership between state and local government, including:

- Laws, policies and incentives that promote regional coordination and local action.
- Establishment of uniform powers and responsibilities of local governments by eliminating any outdated and unnecessary distinctions between cities, counties and towns. (1972 & 1991)

ELECTION LAWS

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that democratic government depends on the informed and active participation of its citizens; that voting is a right and responsibility; and that election laws, regulations and administrative procedures should be uniformly designed and applied, and adequately funded to facilitate and increase voter participation throughout Virginia. The League further believes that democratic government, at the state, as well as federal, levels depends upon the voters' faith in the integrity of election processes and election outcomes. Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Virginia supports election laws, policies, and funding to ensure that elections are secure and the outcomes verified.

Specifically, the League supports measures to ensure the availability of voter registration and to encourage and facilitate increased voter participation in elections, including: absentee voting by mail and in-person without having to provide a reason; an adequate number of voting machines and trained election officers; the use of satellite voting; split shifts for election officers when needed; online voter registration; the use of electronic poll books; and measures that take advantage of technological advances, as long as they are secure. (2011, 2015, 2021)

The League supports shared funding of statewide voter registration and election systems by the localities and the Commonwealth, providing adequate authority and resources to the Department of Elections (ELECT) and the State Board of Elections (SBE) for oversight and enforcement of laws and standards for registration and elections uniformly throughout the Commonwealth, and the facilitation of convenient yet secure voting for Virginia's military and overseas voters. (2011, 2015, 2021).

The League further supports measures to secure Virginia's voter registration database, processes, and equipment against cyber- and physical threats. The League supports the introduction of ranked choice voting as an alternative to plurality voting. The League believes in increased voter access, removal of barriers to voting, such as a photo identification requirement at voting locations, and the prevention of voter suppression. (2021)

FISCAL POLICY

Support for a responsible state fiscal policy that includes:

- A flexible and diverse tax structure that is based on a progressive income tax.
- Continuous evaluation of all programs for need, effectiveness, efficiency, and economy.
- Flexibility in developing local sources of revenue.
- State commitment to funding of state-mandated programs.
- Opposition to constitutional or statutory limits on state/local government spending or revenue sources. (1964, 1977 & 1979)

REAPPORTIONMENT & REDISTRICTING

Support for a decennial redistricting plan approved by the General Assembly, including establishment of a bipartisan commission to prepare a plan for legislative approval, and consideration of natural geographic boundaries, jurisdictional boundaries, communities of interest, and competitiveness in addition to the constitutional requirements.

In addition to the Virginia constitutional requirement of equal population, contiguous and compact districts and the Voting Rights Act requirements for protecting the voting strength of minority groups, the League supports the following considerations in redistricting:

- Natural geographic boundaries;
- Jurisdictional boundaries;
- Communities of interest; and
- Competitiveness

The League believes that the Virginia constitution should be amended to provide that redistricting will occur on a decennial basis only. (1985, 2007)

TRANSPORTATION

Support for regionally balanced transportation systems which efficiently and economically meet regional needs without adversely affecting planned growth or the environment.

- Regional organizations that set policy for a multi-modal public transportation program, that plan, coordinate, and are the designated recipients of federal and state funds, that operate or contract for services, and that could have taxing power.
- A mixture of public and private funding for public transportation.
- Increased local participation with some public funds utilized to encourage private support and the use of innovative financing methods, such as tax incentives to encourage private sector participation.
- The use of a variety of incentives to increase the use of public transportation.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND VIRGINIA LAW

Support for the legal recognition of marriage as an equal partnership, including:

- Policies that recognize non-monetary as well as monetary contributions to a marriage by each partner.
- Surviving spouse policies that specify that if one spouse dies without a will, the surviving spouse should inherit all property.
- Divorce policies that recognize separately acquired property before marriage and during marriage through gifts or inheritance.
- Elimination of the concept of "fault" in the court's division of marital property.
- Legal recognition of valid pre-nuptial contracts. (1980 & 1983)
- The League of Women Voters of Virginia Opposes Sexual harassment (2019)

NATURAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Support for achieving and maintaining acceptable air quality through:

- Adoption of strict vehicle emission standards.
- Development of alternative fuels.
- Programs and regulations that foster efficient transportation modes. (1993)

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES: HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in the Commonwealth of Virginia until there is sufficient evidence from robust studies to show that hydraulic fracturing will not have a negative impact on the health, safety, and well-being of citizens, local jurisdictions, or the natural environment.

Absent a moratorium, the League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that the Commonwealth of Virginia, including all relevant state departments and state agencies, and local governments, have a responsibility to safeguard Virginia's critical features and to ensure the public's safety, health, and welfare by 1) adopting strict systems for monitoring, regulation, and oversight of the hydraulic fracturing, including all related facilities, and fracking impacts on critical features (e.g. ground and surface water resources and recharge areas; geologic resources and seismic zones; historic sites and districts), public facilities (e.g. recreation areas, schools, wildlife preserves), local and regional infrastructure, and local and regional economies; 2) developing and implementing systems of financial assurance so all fracking-related expenses incurred by the Commonwealth and the local jurisdictions are borne by the industry; 3) granting localities authority to regulate hydraulic fracturing operations; 4) providing state funding to local governments to offset the costs incurred by local governments; 5) developing a state-level system for long term monitoring of local impacts and enforcement of regulation throughout the full life cycle of the hydraulic

LAND USE

Support for state policies that include:

- Create state long-range comprehensive land use plan coordinated with local and regional plans.
- Protection of critical environmental areas through some land use controls.
- Assistance to and increased flexibility for localities in land use planning and control. (1975)

WATER SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION

Support for a comprehensive state effort to protect the water supplies, including:

- Recognition of the connection between ground and surface water.
- Decision making based on the concept of sharing in the use of ground water.
- State responsibility for the collection of information on water resources and planning for future use.
- Land use policies that guarantee protection of water resources.
- Moratorium on uranium mining until modern, enforceable and effective best practices are approved by an independent assessment team. (1983, 2014)

SOCIAL POLICY

ADULT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Support for addressing the crime of adult domestic violence through:

- Uniform law enforcement including mandatory arrest, reporting.
- Educational and training programs for medical, clerical, law enforcement personnel, and the public on the problem of adult domestic violence as well as conflict resolution.
- Assistance and training programs for victims. (1992)

ADULT JUSTICE

Support for an adequately funded judicial and corrections system:

- Serves all people without discrimination and incorporates restorative justice practices.
- Provides judicial selection by the General Assembly with the use of a nominating commission of lay persons and lawyers.
- Sentencing by judges.
- Effectively administered corrections system that protects society and rehabilitates offenders.
- Professionally administered local jails and community-based corrections.
- Policies that include alternatives to incarceration and use of community volunteers.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Support for state funding mechanisms and laws/policies that increase the supply of and equal access to safe, quality, affordable housing for all Virginians. (2021)

- Enhanced funds for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund.
- Private/public partnerships to obtain housing for the mentally ill.
- Consider a waiver for Medicaid to pay for counseling for housing options.
- Establish tax credits or other financial incentives for landlords and developers who build affordable housing, and local government policies that increase affordable housing stock.

CHILD CARE

Support for state policies that promote quality childcare that is affordable, accessible, and available, including:

- Minimum comprehensive state license standards for child care facilities.
- Incentives for development of child care programs.
- Financial assistance for low-income families.
- Coordinated resource and referral systems.
- Training for caregivers and parents.

Also, support a requirement that professional childcare givers report child abuse /neglect. (1988, 2013)

CHILDREN AT RISK

Support for state and local policies that recognize the basic needs of all children including shelter, family, and community support, health care, food, education, and personal safety, including: • Fund preventive services, rehabilitative programs, family support programs, crises services, court costs, and detention.

- Evaluations of programs and services.
- State mandated case planning and case management systems to assure timely access to services.
- Internal and judicial grievance procedures. (1989, 2013)

EDUCATION

Support for state funding for public schools that insures a high quality education with equal educational opportunities for all children, including:

- Full funding for the Standards of Quality and state mandates.
- Increasing the state's share of education costs.
- Funding for half-day pre-kindergarten programs for at-risk children, and full-day kindergarten programs.
- Funding some portion of capital costs; and
- Improving the funding formula for determining local ability to pay, using it as a basis for distribution of state education funds. (1993)

Support a challenging curriculum, high expectations of students and teachers in mastering that curriculum, and appropriate assessments of student achievement for a quality education in the public school system K-12.

Essential curriculum elements include:

- Core disciplines (English, Math, Science, History and Social Studies);
- Art, Music, Physical Education, Health, and Foreign Languages;
- Analytical skills;
- Integrated technology; strong remedial programs;
- Programs for at-risk, gifted and special needs students;
- Education for students with limited English proficiency, in which emphasis is placed on teaching English; and
- Career and technical education.

Support professional education for principals and teachers and on-going staff development; class size appropriate to instructional goals; a safe environment for students and staff; and discipline, preventative programs and a consistently enforced, well-defined system of rules; guidance counseling for academics and support services; and parental and community support and involvement. Support opportunities to select a specific program or school. These opportunities should be based on a system of equity so that all qualified students have equal access. (2003)

Elements of a quality education also include: school- based teamwork, goal setting and decision-making, application of learning to life experiences, and incentives, recognition, and awards for both students and teachers. (1999)

The League of Women Voters believes that K-12 public schools should prevail as the highest priority for school choice in Virginia because public schools

- Sustain democracy by being open to all children,
- Serve the public and prepare citizens to maintain our government,
- Allow the public to vote on school governance and school policy, and
- Allow the exchange of ideas and participation in decision-making.

To support this priority the LWV-VA believes that all K-12 school programs that receive public funds should be required to meet certain standards and criteria for their approval, administration, accountability, oversight, transparency, nondiscrimination, assessment, fiscal management, and operations.

- LWV-VA believes that no public funds should go to sectarian schools.
- LWV-VA supports the option of public charter schools that follow the extensive regulations in the

2018 Virginia Code for their establishment and administration.

- LWV-VA opposes “tuition tax credit” programs that provide scholarships to private schools (EISTC).
- LWV-VA opposes “vouchers” (“Parental Choice Education Savings Accounts”)
- LWV-VA supports virtual online programs provided by public schools that follow the 2018 regulations and requirements for oversight by the Department of Education and local public school administrators.
- LWV-VA opposes private profit-making providers of virtual online programs. (2018)

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Support for an adequately funded and separate Department of Juvenile Justice that emphasizes prevention and rehabilitation, to include:

- individualized treatment and training programs, with vocational and alternative education opportunities.
- family planning support.
- mental health and substance abuse counseling.
- community education and recreation programs for young children.
- alternatives to incarceration such as community service and residence in small group homes.
- Establishment of small therapeutic group or foster homes.
- the removal of juveniles from adult jails and their placement in a juvenile detention facility as necessary.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Support for comprehensive behavioral health care 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.
- Coordination of comprehensive and integrated care among Health and Human Services (specifically Behavioral Health) and other state departments such as Medical Assistance Services (Medicaid), Public Safety (re-entry planning, identification of behavioral health needs in jails/prisons, patient’s rights, substance abuse, and drug/mental health courts), Housing (Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing), and Education (health education from early childhood through adult). These agencies must provide this care along with a focus on community-based services such as Community Service Boards (CSBs).
- Realignment of the funding equation so that a higher proportion of funds to CSBs rather than state institutions. This will result in more cost-effective care that is more responsive to client’s needs.
- Adequate funds and other incentives to ensure sufficient trained staff at all levels of service.
- Continued efforts to decrease the stigmatization of behavioral health problems and care. (2018)

OFFENDER RE-ENTRY

Removing Barriers to Employment

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports the removal of barriers to employment for persons with criminal records. This includes support of what are known colloquially as “Ban the Box” efforts. (2015)

RESTORATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS FOR VIRGINIA FELONS

Support for the automatic restoration of the civil rights of felons, regardless of the nature of their crime, upon their release from incarceration or upon completion of probation or parole. The process should be easy to understand, accessible, transparent and fair with information about the process made available to all. (2009)

- The civil rights of felons in Virginia should be restored automatically either upon their release from incarceration or upon completion of probation and parole.
- The procedure should be identical for all felons, regardless of the nature of their crime.
- The process should be easy to understand, accessible, transparent and fair
- Information about the process should be available to felons, the justice and correction system and the general public. (2009)