

LWVUS and LWVPDX positions on Equal Opportunity, Meeting Human Needs, Housing, Education

LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position

(Summary: **Equality of Opportunity**)

Equal Rights. Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA. Support equal rights for all under state and federal law regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

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

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

Statement of Position on Equality of Opportunity, as revised by the National Board in January 1989, based on positions announced by the National Board in January 1969, adopted by the 1972 Convention, expanded by the 1980 Convention and the 2010 Convention.

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.

LWVUS position on Meeting Basic Human Needs

(Summary: **Meeting Basic Human Needs**)

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

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

Support Services. Provide essential support services.

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

Statement of Position on Meeting Basic Human Needs, as revised by the National Board, January 1989, based on positions reached from 1971 through 1988.

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 child care 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.

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 child care, 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:**
 - a. job training;
 - b. basic education;
 - c. exemptions for primary care givers;
 - d. supplemental support services such as child care and transportation;
 - e. equitable compensation to ensure that program participants earn the same wages and benefits as other employees performing similar work;
 - f. 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:**
 - a. assure that our economic system is functioning to produce and maintain sufficient decent housing for citizens at all income levels;
 - b. 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;
 - c. 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;
- d. 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:**
 - a. **uniform building codes with standards based on performance;**
 - b. **housing codes to protect the health and safety of all citizens.**
- **_State and local tax structures should be examined and revised to:**
 - a. **benefit communities that build housing for lower-income families;**
 - b. **encourage private owners to improve their homes;**
 - c. **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:**
 - a. **evaluating performance;**
 - b. **activating nonprofit sponsorships;**
 - c. **supporting legislation;**
 - d. **developing public awareness of housing discrimination and need.**

See next page for LWVPDX positions on Education and Housing

LWVPDX Positions on Education

Public School Districts in Portland (2011, 2006 revised, 1980, 1979, 1976, 1975, 1973, 1972, 1971, 1969, 1968)

The League of Women Voters believes that public schools should provide a quality education for all children to develop the greatest potential in each individual, and that public education is critical to the success of our city.

Therefore, the League supports:

1. A quality basic education provided for all students, with services available in an equitable way so that all students have access to comparable services, regardless of circumstances such as income, race, ethnicity, geographical location, or family background.
2. Programs or services provided by districts which offer an alternate approach or focus for students with different learning needs, including a strong mix of off-site and on-site vocational education programs.
3. Teacher evaluation that improves teaching quality and student learning.
4. Grade organization that is determined by a number of factors, including evidence-based research, student needs, logistical impacts, and community input.
5. Adherence to set school boundaries with few exceptions, which may be based on educational, emotional, behavioral, or medical criteria, and offering all students access to a consistent and broad spectrum of classes.
6. Creative approaches to achieve diversity in school populations.
7. Changes in the school education structure (use of buildings) which positively affect the quality of education and which take into consideration the preservation of neighborhoods and the needs of the community.
8. Adequate physical facilities, with buildings and all facilities meeting state and local standards.
9. School districts' decisions on future use of land and buildings based on a plan that takes into account population projections, physical conditions, land use designations, and community needs, with coordination between the City of Portland's Comprehensive Plan and relevant infrastructure facility plans.
10. Effort made to generate income to offset the costs of maintaining desirable underused facilities. Public announcements of all district facility plans, including all underused or not-in-use facilities, with adequate information and opportunity for public discussion and participation in the decision-making.

School Funding (2011, 2000)

The League supports adequate and sufficient funding of public education with public money. While the League of Women Voters of Portland recognizes that the major responsibility for funding public schools has shifted to the state level, the League supports local measures when necessary to ensure quality education.

Therefore, the League supports:

1. Using local taxes such as local property tax and business income taxes to augment the funding provided by the State.
2. Using grants and other temporary funding for professional development, pilot projects, or for other onetime needs.
3. Using a combination of local, state, federal or private sources of funding for special education for the gifted and physically, emotionally, and mentally challenged students.

4. **Allowing private funds to be raised in support of individual schools, provided those funds are shared across the district in an equitable and transparent manner.**
5. **Tracking and making available to the public information in an understandable format, including class size, per-pupil expenditures, costs for educating special-needs students, or other cost data.**
6. **Employing the services of a chief financial officer to provide strong, transparent fiscal leadership.**
7. **Participation by local schools and their communities in budget discussions via site-based management.**

LWVPDX positions on Housing

Housing (2001, 1989)

City, County and private sectors should continually monitor changes in the population needing affordable housing and address their housing needs.

Criteria to be used when selecting areas for neighborhood revitalization should include neighborhoods: a) at risk of further deterioration; b) showing some evidence of stability, citizen involvement and community support; c) having a community focal point, such as a school, park, community center and/or convenient transportation.

We support a variety of means to encourage private investments in low-income housing, such as tax abatement, tax credits, low-interest loans and grants.

We favor consolidation of City, County and private agencies involved in housing within the City of Portland. Benefits derived from the consolidation include: less duplication, cost efficiency, convenience to the public, shared knowledge and heightened awareness of the importance of adequate housing.

Affordable Housing Financing and Administration (1981)

The League of Women Voters of Portland supports:

- **Retention of single-room-occupancy (SRO) housing units and support by the City of Portland for rehabilitation for existing units;**
- **Retention of downtown low-income housing supported by federally subsidized loans, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and federal rent subsidies;**
- **Encouragement of privately developed, middle-income housing downtown through incentive low-interest loans;**
- **Avoidance of building closures for building and fire code violations by: a) establishment of a hearings officer position with authority to enforce the code and, b) provision of low-interest loans to building owners for complying with code;**
- **Consolidation of information on the availability and location of subsidized housing in a master list, which could be located with Home Forward (formerly named Housing Authority of Portland);**
- **Sufficient housing expertise within the Planning Commission to facilitate effective attention to housing issues in Portland.**

As a general policy, the League of Women Voters of Portland does not favor city acquisition of buildings for low-income housing or SRO units. Only if all other means for retaining low-income housing or buildings of historical importance have failed, should the city purchase such property. The League recommends that some entity other than the city administer buildings acquired in this manner.

The League favors financing of any such building acquisitions by tax increment funds, housing and Community Development Block Grants or revenue bonds.

Community Residential Facilities (2007, 1977)

The League of Women Voters of Portland supports the use of Residential Care Facilities for socially dependent individuals as defined by state law, Residential Training Facilities for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities and Residential Treatment Facilities for individuals with alcohol and/or drug dependence and those with mental and/or emotional disorders.

The League supports Community Residential Facilities for individuals with a criminal history provided clients are carefully screened and monitored and consideration is given to the impact on the community.

Community Residential Facilities are licensed by the State. Standards should provide for quality staffing, facilities and care.