

GOVERNMENT

DELEGATION OF POWER

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

- Policies and incentives that promote regional coordination and local action.
- Establishment of uniform powers and responsibilities of local governments by changing the distinctions between cities, counties, and towns.
- Coordination of activities and programs of local jurisdictions.
- Re-Write VA Code to clarify the powers of local Government.

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.

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 a reason; an adequate number of voting machines and trained election officers; the use of satellite voting; split shifts for election officers when needed; and measures that take advantage of technological advances such as online voter registration and the use of electronic poll books. The League also supports the shared funding of statewide registration and voting systems by the localities and the Commonwealth; providing adequate authority and resources to the State Board of Elections for oversight and enforcement of laws and standards for registration and elections uniformly throughout the Commonwealth; and the use of secure electronic means to facilitate voter registration and absentee voting for Virginia's military and overseas voters.

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.
- Increased state commitment to funding of state-mandated programs.

Opposition to constitutional or statutory limits on state/local government spending or revenue sources.

REAPPORTIONMENT & REDISTRICTING

Support for the establishment, in law, of a politically balanced and independent Reapportionment Commission for each decennial redistricting to prepare, with the Virginia Department of Legislative Services, a plan for submission to the legislature as specified by the Virginia Constitution. The Commission should be bi-partisan and be composed of individuals who are not elected officials; they should represent the geographical distribution and demographic diversity of the state, and consist of an uneven number of members.

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 Virginia constitution should be amended to provide that redistricting will occur on a decennial basis only.

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 (federal, state, and local) 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.

NATURAL RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY

Support for achieving and maintaining acceptable air quality through:

- Adoption of strict vehicle emission standards.
- Development of less polluting alternative fuels.
- Programs and regulations that foster efficient transportation modes.

Support for limiting smoking in public to designated areas so that nonsmokers are not exposed to smoke.

LAND USE

Support for state policies that include:

- Creation of a state long-range comprehensive land use plan coordinated with local and regional plans.
- State protection of critical environmental areas through some land use controls.
- Assistance to and increased flexibility for localities in land use planning and control.

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.

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 job training programs for victims.

CHILD CARE

Support for state policies that promote quality child care 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 care givers and parents.

CHILDREN AT RISK

Support for state and local policies that recognize the basic needs of all children including shelter, family/community support, health care, food, education, and personal safety, including:

- Funding of 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.

EDUCATION

Part I Funding

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

Part II Quality Education

A challenging curriculum, high expectations of students and teachers in mastering that curriculum, and appropriate assessments of student achievement. The League believes the following elements are essential for a quality education:

- Four core disciplines: English, Mathematics, Science, History and Social Studies;

Part II Quality Education cont'd

- Art, Music, Physical Education, Health and Foreign Languages;
- Analytical skills, application of knowledge and decision-making;
- Technology integrated throughout the curriculum;
- Strong remedial programs implemented at the earliest indication of a student's academic weakness;
- Special offerings for at-risk and gifted students and educational programs for students with special needs, using specified minimum standards;
- Education for students with limited English proficiency, in which emphasis is placed on teaching English;
- Career and Technical education;
- Professional education of principals and teachers and on going staff development;
- Class size appropriate to instructional goals; a safe environment for students and staff; and discipline, providing preventative programs and a well-defined system of rules, consistently enforced;
- Guidance Counselors for academics and support services;
- Parental and community support and involvement;
- 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.

The LWVVA believes that the following are important elements of quality education in the public system, K-12:

- School-based teamwork, goal-setting and decision-making
- Application of learning to life experiences in further education, work, and leisure activities.
- Incentives, recognition, and awards for both students and teachers.

JUSTICE

Support for a judicial system that serves all people without discrimination, including:

- Judicial selection by the General Assembly with use of a nominating commission of lay persons and lawyers.
- Sentencing by judges, not juries, with the availability of a pre-sentencing report.
- Corrections system that is adequately funded, efficiently administered, and humane.
- Corrections system that protects society and rehabilitates offenders, while offering deterrence, diversion, protection, and restitution programs.

- Local jails and community-based corrections facilities that are professionally administered and use community resources in the rehabilitation and treatment of prisoners.

JUVENILE/ADULT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Support for the values and principles of restorative justice for juveniles and adults; support for development locally and at the state level of activities, programming and training consistent with these values and principles in responding to crime. This option should be offered at the earliest possible time in the process, with juveniles being given preference if funds are limited.

Persons to be involved:

for Juveniles: victims, schools, family, juvenile justice system, community, offender, restorative justice volunteers, trained attorneys, judges;

for Adults: victims, adult education programs, family, adult correction system, community, offender, trained attorneys, judges, volunteers, Restorative Justice Association of VA.

Programs or practices to be offered as options: Victim-offender dialogue (variety of models): Activities addressing anger management, accountability, empathy for the victim and the impact of crime; Mental health screening and substance abuse programs; Jobs and skills training; Family counseling.

Consider case by case the needed involvement of community and/or family members, trained volunteers, attorneys, judges, social services, family counselors, and after school programs.

And, in all cases protect privacy of victims, offenders and others. Local courts, social agencies and trained volunteers should collect data from programs.

In coordination with the Supreme Court of Virginia and the Restorative Justice Association of VA the legislature or administrative agencies should develop standards and measures of evaluation. Measures of evaluation should include: victim satisfaction, offender compliance, extent harm was repaired, recidivism, benefit to the community, use of community service that develops skills.

RESTORATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS FOR VIRGINIA FELONS

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that the civil rights of felons, regardless of the nature of their crime, should be restored automatically upon their release from incarceration or upon completion of probation or parole and that the process should be easy to understand, accessible, transparent and fair with information about the process made available to all

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Support for a juvenile justice system, funded by both the state and local governments, that emphasizes prevention and rehabilitation, with:

- Prevention programs that include community programs, education and recreation programs for young children and family and parenting support.
- Rehabilitation programs that provide treatment and training to meet the needs of each child and include counseling, vocational training and accredited academic programs.
- Alternative education programs or community service for juveniles who have been expelled or suspended from school or paroled from correctional facilities.
- In- and out- patient mental health and substance abuse programs oriented to the needs of juveniles.
- Pre- and post-dispositional community-based programs
- Establishment of small group homes.
- Removal of juveniles from jails.
- Continuation of the Department of Juvenile Justice as a separate department with adequate funding.

MENTAL HEALTH

Support for a comprehensive state public mental health care system of quality, statewide and community based services that meets the mental health needs of all Virginians, including:

- Long-range planning, coordination among agencies, and the use of established criteria for allocation of funds.
- Assistance in providing adequate and appropriate housing for the mentally ill.
- Comprehensive and consistent service delivery in all local communities.
- Advocacy programs that ensure patients' rights at all levels.

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
- well-defined channels for citizen input and review

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of VIRGINIA



Positions for Action in Brief

*A Summary of
Position Statements arrived at
by members*

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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 governmental 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.