

## **LWWIL GOVERNMENT POSITIONS: GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

### **Support for handgun and assault weapon control.**

**Position in Brief:** The League supports legislative controls to stop the proliferation of private ownership of handguns and their irresponsible use. The League advocates restricting access to automatic and semi-automatic assault type weapons.

**HANDGUN CONTROL (1976):** 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):** The League advocates restricting access to automatic and semi-automatic assault type weapons. 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 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. The LWVIL led the successful effort to adopt a national gun control position at the 1990 LWVUS Convention.

**LWVIL action** The League has actively supported legislation to increase controls on handguns and restrict or prohibit access to assault weapons. LWVIL worked to support the retention of responsible state laws, such as legislation in the areas of domestic firearm violence, child safety, gun dealer regulation and assault weapon bans. LWVIL opposed concealed carry legislation and the preemption of local gun control laws. In 2004-05 on the state level, 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.

LWVIL has continued to support and lobbied to protect federal initiatives, including the Brady Bill, the Assault Weapons Ban and the Assault Weapons Ban and Law Enforcement Protection Act of 2003. LWVIL is a coalition partner with the Brady Campaign and the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence. The Joyce Foundation funded a new gun violence prevention group, the Legal Community Against Violence. All groups have combined resources and are working as the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (ICPGV).

In 2007, LWVIL successfully applied to ICPGV for a mini-grant to pursue meaningful gun violence reform in Illinois. At present, many bills are in various stages in the state legislature. ICPGV has identified many "Legislators of Focus". Several local League members who are these specific legislators' constituents have been attending in-district lobbying meetings with their own representatives. In addition, LWVIL has issued TFAs to all League members in the affected districts. Local Leagues state-wide have included a discussion of gun issues in their Legislative Interviews. LWVIL has engaged in a "Letters to the Editor" project advocating the passage of these common sense gun laws. LWVIL initiated publicity for the Cook County LWV on the November 2006 advisory referendum to ban assault weapons. All county LWV members and bulletin editors received e-mails urging the passage of the ban. The vote was 86% in favor. 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).

League had an active presence at the Chicago Million Mom March in the summer of 2000. LWVIL was represented at the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence (ICHV) Midwest Action Conference and cosponsored the ICHV Rally Against Handgun Violence in 2004.

The Legal Community Against Violence/Illinois Campaign Against Gun Violence (LCAV) has been a coalition of many groups, including LWVIL and the Brady Campaign, dedicated to gun violence prevention. Through funding from the Joyce Foundation, the LCAV has awarded several mini-grants to coalition members in order to carry out the mission of legislating sensible gun laws for the state; LWVIL has been the recipient for the past two years. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, the LCAV is no longer in operation.

In 2009, many different gun bills were introduced and voted upon in the state legislature. Through ongoing research, the LCAV was able to identify various "legislators of focus"- those state representatives and/or senators likely to oppose different bills. LCAV would then organize in-district lobbying visits to the designated legislators and then LWVIL requested local Leagues with members in the district to attend these meetings. Several local Leagues participated in these efforts: Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, Homewood/Flossmoor, Naperville and Wheaton. Throughout the year, LWVIL also sent out many TFAs (Time for Action) requests to our members and wrote many Letters to the Editor in designated districts.

Because of extensive lobbying, LCAV thought we had enough votes to pass HB 48 which addressed the problem of private sales of concealable guns which did not require background checks. Sadly, the bill failed because five state representatives reneged upon their promise to vote yes.

Another bill which passed the state legislature was HB 182 (concealed carry). Despite great amounts of correspondence (email, phone calls and US mail) from LWVIL members and other coalition members urging Governor Quinn to veto HB 182, he signed it and it is now public law in Illinois.