

SOCIAL POLICY

Summary of League of Women Voters of the United States Positions and Major Action by the Illinois League Under the LWVUS Positions

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

CHILD CARE (1988, based on positions reached from 1969-88): Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality childcare for all who need it.

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 (see LWVIL Children's Services position, pg. 66).
(see Early Intervention for Children at Risk, this section)

EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN AT RISK (1994): Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.

Background From 1991-1999, LWVIL and Illinois Leagues conducted 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, the 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, pg. 18).

LWVIL participates in advocacy initiatives of Voices for Illinois Children through Voices Leadership Committee which is 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 works 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 position, pg. 66, and LWVIL Mental Health position, pg. 74)

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY (1989; based on positions reached in 1969, 1972 and 1980): Support equal access to education, employment and housing. Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.

Education, Employment and Housing

Education – Integration, Quality Education, Tuition Tax Credits, Federal Programs, Education Financing

LWVIL action LWVIL continues to oppose both state and federal tuition tax credits and school voucher proposals. In November 1999, the LWVIL filed suit in Federal Court to block implementation of Illinois' 1999 Tuition Tax Credit law which was unsuccessful. The suit was based on League's long-term commitment to adequately funded public education and League principles calling for free public education under the LWVIL Equal Opportunity's position (see LWVIL Schools position, pg. 28).

Employment/Job Training, Job Creation

LWVIL action 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 TANF recipients into long-term employment in jobs that place them above the federal poverty line. 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.

Equal Rights

LWVIL action The League made a tremendous commitment to passing the Equal Right Amendment 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 support of re-establishment of the State Commission on the Status of Women, on which members sat on various working groups. In 2002, the League again worked with an ERA Illinois coalition to obtain ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in the Illinois Legislature. The ERA amendment passed the Illinois House in Spring 2003. Local League members extensively lobbied their senators, especially in targeted districts throughout 2003 and 2004, however, passage of ERA failed in the 93rd Illinois General Assembly.

Fair Housing

LWVIL action Leagues have supported fair housing through monitoring of anti-red-lining legislation and regulation of mortgage bankers. LWVIL has monitored compliance with the 1988 Federal Fair Housing Act Amendments, which prohibit discrimination in housing against the physically and mentally disabled. League supported proposed legislation amending the Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination against housing voucher holders, the disabled and others with legal sources of income in their right to apply for housing.

Nondiscrimination, Affirmative Action and Pay Equity

LWVIL action The League has supported legislation requiring pay plans for state employees to be based on a system of 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 workplace, business and educational gains of women and minorities. 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 discrimination in pay for similar jobs.

FISCAL POLICY (1984, 1985 and 1986): Support adequate, 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; promote responsible deficit policies; support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

LWVIL action In 1993, the 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 (see LWVIL State Fiscal Policies position, pg. 42).

GUN CONTROL (1990, amended in 1994, 1998): Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

LWVIL action The 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, pg. 25).

HEALTH CARE (1993): Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.

LWVIL action The League has worked to improve access to health care by supporting a variety of legislative initiatives, including: extended medical assistance for TANF families; expanded Medicaid funding for prenatal care, pregnant and nursing women and children under six; allowing nurse practitioners and nurse midwives to serve eligible Medicaid patients; financial incentives to increase health care workers in underserved areas; allowing women to select an obstetrician/ gynecologist as a primary health care provider in managed care plans; insurance portability; and access to health care for uninsured children. Local Leagues have urged their counties to provide health services for the indigent and have urged county health departments to provide access to family planning information and abortion services. The League has been supportive of the expanded role of Healthy Families Illinois, a voluntary home visitation program for first time mothers (see Early Intervention for Children at Risk, this section). League worked in coalition with the Campaign for Better Health care for passage of the Health Care Justice Act (2004). Subsequently, Leagues testified at the Adequate Health Care Task Force statewide hearings. Their final report with recommendations for affordable, quality health care for all was presented to the Governor and legislature in 2007. Enabling legislation expired January 2009. Insurance Rate Fairness HB3923 was passed by both houses Spring 2009. The intent is to ensure that premiums for individuals and small employers do not include disproportionate administrative and marketing overhead. Deadline for Action 11/30/09. Comprehensive Reproductive Health legislation, SB2354, was introduced in the 96th General Assembly. Though the bill will not be called for a vote this session, plans are underway to re-introduce in 2010. LWVIL is a member of the Campaign for Reproductive Choice and Access, a coalition supporting the bill.

MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS (1989; based on positions reached from 1971-88): Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families (see LWVIL Income Assistance position, pg. 71).

LWVIL action 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.

Housing Supply

LWVIL action LWVIL has worked through the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission to encourage affordable housing opportunities in conjunction with job opportunities. 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 supports programs to prevent homeowners from losing their homes through mortgage foreclosure. 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. League supported the Rental Subsidy Support Program legislation that passed in 2005. League also supported increased appropriations for homelessness prevention as part of the "It Takes a Home to Raise a Child" campaign of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless that the League endorsed in 1999. In addition to the "It Takes a Home to Raise a Child" project,

at that time the League also backed legislation to prevent foreclosures. 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 litigation, 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 LWWIL Land Use position, pg. 54).

Support Services

LWWIL action LWWIL 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. LWWIL supported legislation increasing legal remedies for battered spouses, and local Leagues have been involved in establishing and funding domestic violence shelters.

Transportation

LWWIL action LWWIL 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). LWWIL supports legislation providing up to twelve months of transitional transportation assistance to former TANF recipients no longer eligible due to increased income (see LWWIL Land Use position, pg. 54).

URBAN POLICY (1979, revised 1989): Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

LWWIL action League action in all of the areas of Social Policy, as well as federal and state fiscal issues, represent a significant commitment to improve the quality of life in Illinois cities.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION (1994): Support violence prevention programs in communities.

LWWIL action (See LWWUS Early Intervention for Children at Risk position, this section).

<p>NOTE: THIS EDITION OF <i>WHERE WE STAND</i> COVERS THE PERIOD 2009-2011. AT THE 2001 LWWIL CONVENTION, DELEGATES VOTED TO DROP THE MARITAL LAW POSITION. THE POSITION WAS CONSIDERED TOO OUT OF DATE TO BE ACTED ON. THE POSITION HAD NOT EVER BEEN USED FOR ACTION ON THE STATE LEVEL.</p>

LWVIL SOCIAL POLICY POSITION: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Support for improved state and local services by Illinois state agencies serving children and their families.

Position in Brief: 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. The State has the primary role in funding to ensure that quality services are equitably available throughout the state. The League supports a continuum of community-based services that strengthens and preserves families and fosters healthy growth and development of children. Prevention and early intervention should have high priority. The League supports a juvenile court system that provides opportunities for effective protection, treatment, and rehabilitation. Detention should be reserved for delinquent children who meet professional screening criteria and provided separately from adult programs. The League opposes the automatic transfer of children to the criminal court and the death penalty for children.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES (1967, 1972, 1977, revised 1996): 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 From its inception, the League worked on reform issues relating to maternal and infant care, mothers' pensions and child labor. In 1963, LWVIL Convention delegates adopted a study to evaluate the structure and financing of Illinois welfare services to children and their families, dividing the work into three parts: 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.

LWVIL Convention delegates added a study of day care in 1969. In 1971, the 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. Delegates to the 1975 LWVIL Convention called for a study of the level of services of state agencies serving children. The position adopted two years later pulled together three elements: a reaffirmation of state positions, concurrence with LWV of Cook County positions, and the new consensus on administration. In 1979, the LWVIL received a grant to develop a statewide juvenile court watching project.

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.

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.

In other action, the League:

- Celebrated the 1999 centennial celebration of the juvenile court. Julia Lathrop, second president of the 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.

(See LWVIL Mental Health position, pg. 74, and LWVIL Income Assistance position, pg. 71)

(See LWVUS Social Policy - Child Care and Early Intervention for Children at Risk positions, pg. 61).

LWVIL SOCIAL POLICY POSITION: IMMIGRATION

The League supports state and local community efforts to provide orientation and counseling services for all immigrants. The League supports provisions for educational programs and materials on rights in the workplace for all workers, driving certificates for undocumented workers and the availability of auto insurance for holders of certificates. The League opposes deputizing state and local police to enforce immigration laws, and ordinances that penalize landlords for renting to or prohibit issuance of business permits to undocumented immigrants. The League opposes extending the right to vote to undocumented immigrants.

IMMIGRATION (2007):

- 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.
- The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes 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.
- The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes 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. The LWVIL also believes the State of Illinois should permit and encourage auto insurance providers to issue insurance coverage to holders of such driving certificates.
- The League of Women Voters of Illinois opposes the deputization of state and local police to enforce immigration laws in Illinois.
- The League of Women Voters of Illinois opposes legislation or ordinances at the state and local level that would penalize landlords for renting to undocumented immigrants.
- The League of Women Voters of Illinois opposes legislation or ordinances at the state and local level that would prohibit the issuance of business permits to undocumented immigrants.

- The League of Women Voters of Illinois does not support extending the right to vote to undocumented immigrants.

Background The position on immigration was reached in 2007 after a statewide study.

The topic of immigration 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, this topic was and continues to be debated regularly in the media as well as 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 by state legislators, and communities have been considering local ordinances to address immigration issues. While the LWVIL cannot yet address immigration from the national perspective, pending results of a current national immigration study adopted in June 2006, there are state and local issues the LWVIL could address if there was a LWVIL immigration position.

The scope of the June 2005 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 SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS: INCOME ASSISTANCE

Support for income assistance and supportive services for all low-income individuals and families.

INCOME ASSISTANCE (1971, revised 1997): LWVIL believes that the federal government should bear primary responsibility for financing programs designed to meet the basic needs of individuals and families. LWVIL 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 The LWVIL and the LWVUS conducted simultaneous studies of income assistance in 1971. The state position was inadvertently dropped an unknown number of years ago from *Where We Stand*, and was reinstated by delegates to the 1993 LWVIL Convention. The national position was updated and revised in 1988, and is now included under Meeting Basic Human Needs.

In 1996, at the direction of the state board, a statewide committee reviewed the LWVIL Income Assistance position. A revised position was adopted at the 1997 LWVIL Convention. This revision affirms that federal funding should be the primary source for income assistance; the State's role should be a strong secondary, not supplemental, source.

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). LWVIL is concerned over the IDHS staff reductions in local offices resulting in less than quality services due to very high caseload responsibilities. 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. The League worked for a rewrite of the Illinois Public Aid Code and a strengthened emergency assistance system. The League supported legislation that gave an increase in the TANF grant to Illinois families.

At the federal level, the League opposed the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This legislation ended the federal entitlement income support to all low-income families who meet eligibility criteria 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). League is concerned about possible proposals in the TANF reauthorization, i.e., increase in work hours, allowable

work activities, child care needs and the flexibility provided to the states to work with caseload recipients moving to work and out of poverty, as well as the proposed increase in number of required work hours. League's concerns continue to focus on the need for additional jobs with sufficient wages and supportive services (accessible quality child care; education and job training; transportation and housing; benefits for legal immigrants and single, childless adults; and the need for adequate data to assess the impact of welfare changes over time). League remains concerned that all eligible residents are able to access benefits for which they qualify.

During 1996-97, the League monitored and provided input into the state human services reorganization process.

In 1999, the League 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.

LWVIL supported legislation during the spring 2003 legislative session to establish a refundable state earned income tax credit (EITC), a critical form of income assistance to help working families make the transition from welfare to work. League worked in coalition with Voices for Illinois Children and other organizations on a long-term educational and advocacy campaign to enact a state EITC.

League supports the Voices for Illinois Children's Budget and Tax Policy Initiative that identifies spending policies in legislation that affect children and families. League continues to support effective child support guidelines and collection efforts.

The League works in partnership with the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and Housing Action Illinois for a broad voice in social policy.

LWVIL continues to work with coalitions to improve the well-being of low-income families through monitoring reauthorization of TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), WIA (Workforce Investment Act) and the Food Stamp program.

LWVIL continues to work towards adequate levels of funding to allow increased assistance programs such as TANF [Temporary Assistance to Needy Families], food stamps, low-income utility payments, the WIC [Women, Infants and Children] supplemental food program and family planning programs, affordable housing, transportation availability and employment and education programs.

As in the past we advocate for quality services in the IL Department of Human Services around the State which means caseworkers who are highly trained with caseloads which can allow for quality services for the family. In the past, the League worked for a rewrite of the IL Public Aid Code and a strengthened emergency assistance system.

While there was a small TANF increase in 2008, the economic climate since has not allowed for jobs paying a livable wage to support the families to bring the family's income above the poverty level. In addition, affordable housing opportunities are fewer due to a drop in voucher opportunities and higher rents which has increased the numbers of homeless individuals and families with children needing services.

Cuts in the IL budget have meant a loss in crucial services to vulnerable families and

individuals when those services are most needed. Education and training to produce a skilled workforce prepared for the competitive modern job market have not kept up with the need of those individuals living in poverty.

In addition, League is concerned with the need for supportive services such as quality child care, benefits for legal immigrants and single, childless adults and services for the disabled, young and adult.

We continue to support a refundable state earned income tax credit increase and the effective Workforce Investment Act.

League has worked in partnership with Voices for IL Children, Housing Action IL, National Low Income Housing Coalition, Illinois Works for the Future as well as the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability and other advocates for our issues at the State and Federal levels. In addition, we have joined the Responsible Budget Coalition to regain funding for services to lower income families and individuals in Illinois.

LWVIL SOCIAL POLICY POSITION: MENTAL HEALTH

Support for comprehensive and coordinated services for mentally ill adults and children in both state facilities and community-based programs.

Position in Brief: The League supports a comprehensive and coordinated system of treatment and rehabilitation services for adults and children with mental illness. There should be adequate funding, planning, program standards, and personnel training requirements for both state facilities and community programs. The League supports a broad array of adequate and accessible community services. Although primary responsibility should rest with the state, funding from local, federal, and non-governmental sources should be encouraged. A system of local boards to levy taxes, administer all funds, and to plan and coordinate services should be required throughout the state. The State should require local governments to provide in their zoning ordinances for residential programs for persons with mental illness.

MENTAL HEALTH (1987 and 1989): The League supports a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for mentally ill adults and emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. The Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities 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.

The League supports 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 The 1985 LWVIL Convention established a task force to examine the state mental health system, and in 1986, its findings were reported in *Public Policy on Mental Illness in Illinois*.

The 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.

A Profile of Community Services for the Mentally Ill of Illinois, published in 1989, reported a failure to develop services. As a result, the 1989 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.

In 1993, the League published *A Home of their Own*, a manual designed to assist local community advocates in their efforts to facilitate housing options.

In 1990, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the Public Citizen Health Research Group presented the League with a special award for Public Service to People with Serious Mental Illness.

LWVIL action LWVIL testified on quality of care and access to services in response to the closure of the Metropolitan Child and Adolescent Hospital in Chicago in 1997 and, in 1998, commented on an administrative rule affecting individual care grants for mentally ill children. The LWVIL supported the creation of the Children's Mental Health Partnership in 2003 and works with the partnership to implement the *Strategic Plan for Building a Comprehensive Children's Mental Health System in Illinois*.

League worked in coalition for over five years to achieve insurance parity for mental illness. Since that time advocates have worked on strengthening this weak legislation. At the national level, Congress passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Dominici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. The bill requires the Departments of

Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS) and Treasury to issue regulations before the act goes into effect on January 1, 2010.

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.

LWVIL is a coalition partner with the Mental Health Summit. The goal of the Summit is to preserve and increase funding of mental health services. Its activities include work with the media, lobbying of legislators and the executive branch, building coalitions with traditional and non-traditional allies and identifying issues which may be used to focus legislative and public attention on the problems caused by the underfunding of mental health services in Illinois.

(See LWVUS Social Policy - Early Intervention for Children at Risk position, pg. 61 and Fair Housing position, pg. 63)

(See LWVIL Children's Services position, pg. 66 and LWVIL Criminal Justice position, pg. 18)