

NATURAL RESOURCES

Summary of League of Women Voters of the United States Position and Major Action by Illinois Leagues under the LWVUS Positions

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, waste management and water resources.

(positions reached 1958 - 1986)

AGRICULTURE POLICY (1988): Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

LWVIL action No recent action.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND POLLUTION CONTROL: Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with the maximum protection of public health and the environment.

LWVIL action

Air Quality LWVIL continues to monitor state implementation of the 1990 Clean Air Act and particularly supports efforts to control acid rain damage in a manner that preserves the environmentally sound use of Illinois coal. As the seriousness of global warming became more evident, the League, in 2000, began monitoring clean air legislation. In 2001, the League lobbied for legislation strengthening Illinois' resolve to limit the quantities of emissions from fossil fuel-fired electric generating plants, the single largest industrial air pollution source in the Midwest.

In 2002, Illinois faced the possibility of increased air pollution and health risks due to the federal government's attempt to weaken or delay implementation of a key provision of the Federal Clean Air Act, the New Source Review program. This provision protects Americans from increases in pollution by establishing pollution reduction requirements for aging coal-burning power plants and other major pollution sources. Since 2003, LWVIL has supported state legislation that establishes state clean air rules to replace the federal rollbacks on the New Source Review provisions of the Clean Air Act. In 2005, the LWVIL expressed their appreciation in a letter to United States Senator Barack Obama for his opposition to the Administration's "Clear Skies" legislative initiative, a plan that would weaken or delay the implementation of the Clean Air Act.

In January 2006, Governor Blagojevich issued a proposal to set strict mercury emission limits for coal-fired power plants. In response, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a draft rule requiring nearly every coal-fired power plant in Illinois to install and operate available technologies by 2009 and capture no less than 90

percent of mercury pollution by 2015. This rule was adopted by the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) and approved by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules of the Illinois General Assembly. Local Leagues and League members held forums, wrote letters and contacted legislators during the entire rule-making process for the successful passage of the Mercury Rule.

Illinois also addressed in 2006 and 2007 other major sources of mercury pollution. LWVIL supported legislation introduced in the Illinois General Assembly that promoted the recycling and phasing out of mercury from consumer products as well as various measuring devices.

League members lobbied successfully in support of the Smoke Free Illinois Act which was signed into law in 2007 and prohibits smoking in public places and places of employment

Clean Car Act: The Illinois League, as part of the Illinois Climate Action Network, strongly supports legislation that would require automakers to meet the same high emissions standards for new cars and light trucks already set in 14 other states. The automakers, over a ten-year period, would be required to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by new vehicles sold in Illinois and ultimately would reach the new emissions standard by 2020.

On June 30, 2009, the federal EPA granted California a waiver to the Clean Air Act granting that state the right to set auto emissions standards that are higher than the federal standards. An additional section of the Clean Car Act allows other states to adopt the California motor vehicle standards. In the Illinois House, Karen May introduced a new Illinois Clean Car Act in February 2009 that incorporated the California standards; it was re-referred to the Rules Committee in May 2009.

Climate Change Recognizing the need to address climate change, Governor Blagojevich issued in 2006 an Executive Order on climate change and greenhouse gas reduction. The Illinois Climate Change Advisory Group was created for the purpose of considering the various policies and strategies to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions in Illinois; a comprehensive Statewide Climate Action Plan was to be presented to the Governor by June 2007. LWVIL was invited to join the Illinois Climate Change Advisory Group and attended meetings held in Chicago and Springfield in 2007.

In 2007, various local Leagues expressed interest in helping their local communities lessen their impact on global climate change and joined the Sierra Club's "Cool Cities" program. This program sets up guidelines encouraging units of local governments in the State to endorse the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. A plan for greenhouse gas reduction that best suits the community's needs may also be provided. LWVIL supported legislation introduced in 2007 in the Illinois General Assembly that would allow the Environmental Protection Agency to provide technical assistance to those local communities that endorsed the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

Energy The Illinois League participated in a utilities reform task force in preparation for renewal of the State's Public Utility Act, has lobbied for energy conservation measures and for aid to low-income energy consumers, and has been an annual participant in the Illinois Energy Conference.

Increasing electric rates in 2007 provided the right climate for the Illinois Legislature to pass into law meaningful legislation requiring the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. Provisions in the new legislation passed in 2007 set forth for Illinois historic standards for electricity created by renewable sources and requirements of energy efficiency programs with the goals of effectively stopping the growth of electricity use in the state as well as saving consumers close to \$2 billion dollars per year by 2020. Continuing the transition to a more sustainable energy economy for Illinois, various green initiatives were incorporated into legislation introduced during the 2008 and 2009 sessions. Legislation including an energy efficiency portfolio standard for natural gas as well as legislation increasing the number of utility companies meeting renewable energy goals were passed in 2009. Legislation was also passed requiring both residential and commercial buildings as well as state buildings to adopt specific energy conservation codes or energy efficient building standards. Specific goals for solar energy in Illinois have been proposed as well as wind generation which is seen as an important source of energy for Illinois, bringing jobs and millions of dollars in rural economic development.

Illinois Smart Grid Initiative (ISGI): The Smart Grid is a complete modernization of the electric system to improve efficiency, reduce outages, integrate alternative energy supplies such as wind energy, and help consumers manage their energy usage and costs. A key component of the Smart Grid is the Smart Meter that will allow consumers to respond immediately to price fluctuations and meet the utilities' emissions reduction goals through energy efficiency.

The Illinois League is a participant in the ISGI collaboration for Smart Grid implementation mandated by state legislation and the Illinois Commerce Commission. The Collaborative is looking at a wide range of implementation issues that will shape Smart Grid deployment in Illinois including consumer and environmental concerns, cost recovery for the utilities, and technology. Meanwhile, the two largest utilities, Com Ed and Ameren, have applied for federal American Recovery and Reinvestment matching funds to help start some Smart Grid work and Advance Metering Infrastructure pilot programs in several Illinois communities.

Land Use (see LWWIL Land Use position, pg. 54).

Water Resources The Illinois League supported efforts to develop a comprehensive groundwater protection plan for Illinois based on a policy of non-degradation and continues to work for stronger legislation to protect groundwater quality. Over the past decade, the League has participated in the Illinois Wetlands Advisory Committee, the Clean Water Dialogue Group, the Citizens Advisory Group on Waukegan Harbor, the Chicago Shoreline Protection Commission, and Healing Our Waters coalition (HOW).

Local Leagues have sponsored educational forums and successfully waged groundwater protection and water quality campaigns. To recognize the efforts of members of local Leagues on behalf of the environment and especially the efforts promoting conservation and protection of clean water throughout the state, the LWWIL in 1997 received the "Making Waves Award."

Since 2001, when "isolated wetlands" within states lost federal protection, LWWIL has supported efforts that have been made to enact legislation protecting Illinois' wetlands. Since opposition to wetland protection has been great, passage of legislation protecting Illinois' wetlands has not been successful. However, the League and other groups were successful during the Spring 2005 legislative session in defeating a bill that would have weakened existing wetlands up to 0.5 acre without any mitigation for the loss.

Scientists consider the ecosystems of Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes to be on the edge of collapse. Recognizing the threats to the health of the Great Lakes, League members joined with the with the Lake Michigan League of Women Voters (LMLWV), formerly Lake Michigan Interleague, to educate the public and advocate for full funding and implementation of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. These bills include removing toxic wastes, aquatic and habitat restoration, sewer system upgrades.

Invasive species into U.S. waters are of great concern. The League is monitoring the progress of the electric barrier in the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal which was built to prevent an Asian Carp invasion into Lake Michigan and is following the development of treatment systems to control the introduction and spread of non-indigenous species from ships discharging ballast water.

Waste Management Source reduction, waste reduction and recycling measures have been a high priority. LWVIL has supported restrictions on packaging, recycling initiatives, planning mandates, the local review process for siting of landfills or incinerators, stronger state regulation of hazardous waste and low-level radioactive waste, pollution prevention initiatives and funding for cleanup of hazardous waste sites. A League member served on the state Task Force for the Development of Recycled Markets. Many local Leagues have been active in expanding recycling mandates and organizing waste reduction and recycling projects in their communities. Several local Leagues have co-sponsored IEPA household hazardous waste pick-up days.

The LWVIL Solid Waste Legislation Committee researched and wrote two bills on household hazardous waste (HHW) which were introduced into the Illinois General Assembly in April 1991. One bill required counties to plan a separate collection of HHW and the other banned HHW from landfills after 1996. Recognizing that an increasing deficit in state revenues would thwart passage of either bill, the committee worked to amend a bill which required the IEPA to plan to collect HHW from households and to distribute public information on HHW. The bill was signed into law in September of 1992.

In 1995, LWVIL co-sponsored with the IEPA six community outreach workshops throughout the state designed to inform plant managers, environmental managers and public relations managers on ways to conduct meaningful and effective community outreach programs. Members from six local Leagues participated in each of the meetings.

In support of the “reduce, reuse, recycle” components of the waste management hierarchy, as well as maximum protection of public health and the environment, the League lobbied successfully during the 1995-96 legislative session for the repeal of the Retail Rate Law of 1987 which subsidized incinerators.

The League was part of a statewide outreach panel organized in 1995 by the Chemical Industry Council of Illinois (CICI) to address environmental, health and safety issues related to chemical manufacturing in Illinois and to help shape a dialogue between the industry and the public. The panel is part of the Responsible Care Initiative launched in 1988 by the Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA).

The LWVIL welcomed the creation of a new House Committee – the Environmental Health Committee – during the 2005 legislative session. The League worked successfully with other groups to pass legislation considered by this committee that would ban a class of toxic chemicals commonly used as flame retardants in consumer products in favor of safer alternatives. These chemicals, commonly known as PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers), are rapidly accumulating in our bodies, homes, and in the fish and sediment of Lake Michigan. The League also supported legislation strengthening Illinois EPA's enforcement authority when dealing with hazardous releases into the soil and groundwater. Protection of public health and the environment as well as promotion of public participation was increased with the successful passage of this legislation.

With increasing evidence of the health effects resulting from the exposure to toxic chemicals in our environment and consumer products, LWVIL monitored legislation eliminating some of the most dangerous chemicals found in certain consumer products. Since children are the most vulnerable to these chemicals, Child-Safe Chemical Acts were introduced during the 2008 and 2009 legislation sessions. Although this legislation failed to receive support, the Chicago City Council voted to ban the use of one of these toxic chemicals, bisphenol A (BPA), in baby bottles and sippy cups effective January 31, 2010. A TFA was issued supporting the phasing out of the toxic flame retardant decaBDE. Legislation phasing out the use of this toxic chemical commonly found in TV's, mattresses, and other consumer products also failed to receive support.

Nuclear Issues In 1990-91, the League served as grant administrator for a fund established by the Illinois and Kentucky Compact Commission to enable citizens to participate fully in the public hearing process on the siting of an Illinois low-level radioactive waste facility. In 1996, the League reviewed applications from Illinois nonprofit groups for technical assistance grant funds made available by the Central Midwest Low-Level Radioactive Waste Compact Commission. These grants allowed the groups to hire technical advisors for the understanding of the criteria and technical issues as well as presenting testimony to the Illinois Low-Level Radioactive Waste Task Group. The issue is still unresolved, as an Illinois site has not yet been selected. The League, along with coalition partners, spoke at a press conference in 2002 asking U.S. Senators to vote against a national high-level waste repository at Yucca Mountain.

NATURAL RESOURCES: Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.