

# 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 93<sup>rd</sup> 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 96<sup>th</sup> 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 <b>MARITAL LAW</b> 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>
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