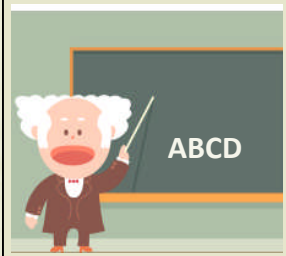




# Special Issue Brief

## NATIONAL EDUCATION STUDY

- A - Advocacy
- B - Budget
- C - Common Core Standards
- D - Don't be Left Behind!



### About this Issue Brief

This is the first in a series of special Issue Briefs designed to help League members in Illinois get up to speed on the National Education study and consensus project.

The briefs will touch on the issues and we will reference the longer, more detailed issue reports with a web address for those who wish to read further.

### THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

This fall, Leagues across the Nation will be participating in the study and consensus process for a position on the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education.

You are likely aware that there are some big changes being discussed for our public schools across the nation. Since the LWVUS currently has no position on this issue, we will not be able to support or oppose, or even comment on the proposals. Congress has been considering the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which includes the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB). While NCLB is credited with raising the awareness that some chil-



### It's Our Turn to Study!

ly viewed as a failure. In fact, by 2014, the year that all schools in the US should be 100% compliant, it is anticipated that most if not all will not meet AYP (adequate yearly progress). NCLB does not recognize growth if it does not meet the benchmark, and the emphasis on standardized testing does not allow for critical thinking curriculum or measure a child's pro-

gress beyond the test scores. Is there a better way than ESEA to improve the learning skills and knowledge of our students? Does ESEA need to be changed? Without a consensus on this issue, we as League members will have our hands tied and not be able to comment or encourage a change in the ESEA. While Congress recognizes the flaws in the Act, they have not acted to change it, which leaves the current law in place. Will League members be happy to reduce themselves to bystanders if this act stands or new proposals are worse?

We think its time for us to do our homework so we can be advocates!

## WHAT WILL WE BE STUDYING?

We will be getting a general introduction to the role of the federal government in public education in this issue brief. We will also endeavor to help you understand why and how a League study and consensus are done.

In future issues we will zero in on two important

components being studied: **Education Funding & Equity**, and **Common Core Standards**.

Education funding and Equity deals with resources and opportunities available to all students, those from our affluent neighborhoods and those from high poverty neighborhoods.

Common Core Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn and stay the same no matter where they live. This will ensure that students are receiving the same high quality education from school to school and from state to state.

### Find the Materials

on: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

- click For Members
  - click Programs & Projects
  - Click Federal Role in Educ.
- You can find a description of the study, Leaders Guide, some Executive Summaries, camera ready articles for newsletters, background information, a webinar and more.

*The LWVUS Board of Directors will approve the official position of the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education by March of 2012.*

## TIMELINE FOR THE STUDY

The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education study was first proposed and passed in June of 2010 at the Atlanta, Georgia League of Women Voters Convention.

The LWVUS Board of Directors approved the study in October of 2010 and approved the study materials and consensus questions in April of 2011.

Local Leagues will conduct the study and come to consensus by November of 2011.

Consensus reports are due into the LWVUS website by November 30, 2011.

The LWVUS will analyze all responses and write the position paper. The LWVUS Board of Directors will approve the official position on the Role of the Federal

Government in Public Education by March of 2012.

All local Leagues will then be able to advocate with the LWVUS position on this national issue. And we should all have an excellent grasp of this issue after our study and review of all the background materials. And we will have done our homework!

## WHAT IS A CONSENSUS?

Consensus is not a vote. It is a mutual agreement of League members who have arrived at the agreement through discussion. During discussion, everyone has an opportunity to voice their viewpoints, and the issue is examined

from all sides. Consensus questions provide structure for the meeting. Members discuss the pros and cons until it becomes clear that consensus has or has not been reached on each question. Each local League will

have a discussion leader to help keep the group focused on the task at hand. When consensus is reached it must be approved by the local board before being posted on the LWVUS website.



You can invite the public to join you in the study process but only League members can participate in the consensus.

WE WILL TAKE A LOOK AT OUR HISTORY



Will they be racing to the top soon?

The Federal Government began giving land grants to build schools back in the late 1700s. In the 1800s Congress granted surplus funds to states for public education. Into the 1900s colleges were receiving grants and the GI Bill was a boon to soldiers returning from war.

Special Education was mandated and many handicapped children were in school for the first time.

Programs like Head Start recognized the importance of getting children at risk into school early.

As we headed into the 21st Century, talk began on national standards and grants became more competitive. Reform was the new focus of our education system. Accountability looms large as laws like No Child Left Behind have high stakes consequences for struggling schools.

RESEARCH HAS BEEN DONE

League members have put together some very impressive research and it is available on the LWVUS website. We do not have to reinvent the wheel on this, all we have to do is read.

You might want to read the consensus questions before reading the materials so you can keep in mind which information will fac-

tor into your consensus discussions.

Right now there is a lot of education news in our newspapers and on our local media. This is a hot topic right now. If we have children in public schools, or grandchildren, or if we live in a house in a neighborhood, we should be very interested in the quality of

our local public schools. Nothing impacts the value of your home or your comfort zone like the schools in your neighborhood. There are lots of good schools and some not so good. We need to be aware of the changes being proposed so we can speak up when our support is needed.

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Let your local League President know that you are interested in participating in the study and consensus. Start viewing the research material on the LWVUS website (*See Find the Materials on page 2*). Offer to serve on your local

League's committee for the study. Talk to your friends and neighbors and invite them to join you in the study. Only League members can participate in the consensus but the study part will be very informative. The changes being

proposed will likely have a big impact on our local public schools for some time to come.

Lets get informed so we can have a discussion with our Congressmen about what's best for our next generation.





*League of Women Voters - South Suburban Cluster*

## NATIONAL EDUCATION STUDY

- Begin your study in late Summer/Early fall
- Study the Issues
- Conduct your Consensus Meeting
- Report your Consensus Results to LWWUS by November 30, 2011

## GETTING STARTED

Look for the Leader's Guide on the LWWUS website. It has information on how to get started. One of the first things each local League will do is select the best person who will be a good Leader to guide everyone through the consensus process.

Consider joining up with another League in your area. Find a good speaker who can help you understand the funding equity issue, perhaps a school superintendent or business manager from your local school district. Open your meetings to the public. Plan your study so you can



have your consensus all wrapped up by November 15th. All consensus results must be posted on the consensus form on the LWWUS website by November 30th and your local League Board must review and accept your consensus before that can

be done.

Don't miss this opportunity. We need every good opinion and lots of good conversation. We need to consider the pros and cons of any and all proposals made to improve our public schools in the near future.



Please join us.

**Don't Be Left Behind!!**