

**LWVIL PROGRAM PLANNING REPORT  
RECOMMENDED PROGRAM ITEMS  
APRIL 2013**

The program recommendations of the State Board of LWVIL for 2013-2015 are itemized below. These recommendations are based on the responses of 18 local Leagues representing 45% of our local Leagues. The local Leagues reported 209 member participants representing an estimated 1355 members from those 18 Leagues. A tally of the responses indicates the following:

**I. Readoption of all current positions as stated in *Where We Stand, 2011-2013 Program*, with the exception of the position on Charter Schools.**

Several local Leagues recommended updates and restudies of some of our positions. The not-recommended items listed on Attachment 1.

**II. Adoption of Two New Positions**

1. Affirm the position on State Pension Reform resulting from the LWVIL study that was adopted at the LWVIL 2011 convention, completed in November 2012, and approved by the Board on January 12, 2013. See Attachment 2.
2. Concur with the LWV Michigan position on the Great Lakes Ecosystem. See Attachment 3.

**III. Study/Update LWVIL Position on Charter Schools**

The Issues Committee recommends an update of the Illinois LWVIL position on Charter Schools.

*Although all 18 Leagues submitting program planning responses said they want the current position retained, several Leagues raised serious concerns about the position. Three Leagues reported strong interest and characterized the position as out of date. The education specialists on the Issues Committee agreed that the effect of withdrawing funds from public schools for charter schools and the effectiveness of charter schools themselves should be examined. The proliferation of charters and their impact on school funding points to an update rather than dropping the position. The Issues Committee would coordinate the update by appointing a chair and creating an update committee to work on it. The current position is Attachment 4.*

**IV. Action Focus:**

**A. Readopt Action Focus: Climate Change**

*Opportunities for advocacy on the vast array of climate change issues continue to grow and many local Leagues are very active in this area. In addition to threats to our environment, health and well being from energy emissions, air and water pollution, and invasive species, new problems are on the horizon. Delegates to the LWVUS 2010 Convention agreed that "fracking", where high pressure water is pumped underground to fracture geologic formations to release natural gas, poses a threat to drinking water and other water resources. Responsibility for protecting the environment from this activity has become the responsibility of the individual*

*states. Storm water management has come to the fore in some communities while dealing with adverse effects of severe draught and heat impact others.*

**B. Readopt Action Focus: Fiscal Policy and Tax Reform - Constitutional Amendment to Allow for a Graduated Rate Income Tax for Illinois**

*Although the Illinois General Assembly passed a temporary income tax increase in January 2011 to address the state's fiscal crisis, the new revenues did not solve the state's fiscal problems. State funding for services and programs have been severely cut, payments are in arrears, and debt obligations are growing. As local communities feel the impact of those cuts, the public has become more aware of the inequities of our flat income tax structure and more open to change.*

**C. Adopt the Action Focus: Gun Violence Prevention**

*In December 2012 the federal appellate court handed down a decision that threw out Illinois' ban on concealed carry of firearms in public, leaving it to the Legislature to write new laws that would meet second Amendment standards. Recent tragedies across the nation have brought this issue to the forefront at both the state and federal levels.*

**D. Readopt Action Focus: Redistricting Reform**

*In the 2013-2015 biennium the League will continue its efforts to educate the public about redistricting and to influence the way Illinois is redistricted. Since 2011, LWVIL has been active in the Change IL coalition that has been developing wording for a Constitutional amendment for the 2014 ballot. The Redistricting Committee is charged with reviewing the final wording and recommending to the Board whether LWVIL can support the final proposal.*

**E. Adopt the Action Focus: Voting Rights**

*Although Illinois does not currently have voter ID requirements and the State Board of Elections has done much to modernize and ensure that elections are administered equally, there is still work to be done. Presentations at the 2012 and 2013 Issues Briefings brought some of the concerns to light and LWVIL will continue to develop awareness of the problems and ensure that election laws and procedures are uniform throughout the state.*

## **II. Non-Recommended Program Items**

According to the LWVIL bylaws, only program items submitted three months in advance of the convention are eligible for consideration by the convention. The following items were submitted in Program Planning and any of them may be moved for consideration at convention after the recommended program is presented. Further details on how to move non-recommended program items are outlined in the proposed convention rules.

### **1. Non-Recommended Changes to Current Positions**

- **County Government Structure** - Update: Elmhurst and Rochelle      Drop: Evanston

- **State Election Laws - Term Limits**

Restudy/Update: Peoria, Chicago (1 unit)      Drop: Rochelle

Members expressed concern that incumbents are entrenched and issues are not addressed. The pros and cons of term limits are known.

- **Large-Scale Livestock Facilities** - Restudy/Update & Working on: Jo Daviess County

- **Pesticides** - Drop: Evanston

- **Income Assistance** - Update: Rockford

The Rockford LWV requested greater clarification for the reasoning behind the position.

- **Mental Health** - Update: Rockford, Elmhurst

Rockford said that much of the position is seriously out of date and strongly recommends updating it. Specifically, the terminology Behavioral Health has replaced Mental Health and the Department of DMHDD no longer exists under that title.

- **School Finance** - Update/Restudy: Jo Daviess County

- **Fiscal Policy: Statement on Gambling**

Update: Arlington Heights/Mount Prospect/Buffalo Grove

An update is needed to reflect gaming expansion with new data on its impact in the state.

### **2. Non-Recommended New Studies**

- Rochelle -- Require County Administrators
- Elmhurst -- Reducing the Number of Taxing Bodies in Illinois
- Greater Peoria -- High Pressure Hydraulic Fracking

### **3. Other**

Discussion of an open primary in Illinois - Homewood-Flossmoor

Attachment 2

LWVIL Position on  
**State Pension Reform**  
Approved by the State Board, January 2013

**LWVIL Position:**

Recognizing that (a) there is both a revenue problem and a state public pension status problem and (b) that the burdens of changes must be shared by a broad base of stakeholders, the League of Women Voters of Illinois supports:

- Restructuring the five state public pension systems for **Tier 1 EMPLOYEES** hired before January 1, 2011 with an emphasis on a transition period for employees near retirement age to mitigate the impact of any proposed change.
- Assuming such a transition period is established on implementation, LWVIL supports the following reforms:
  - raising the retirement age
  - increasing the minimum years of service requirement for full retirement benefits
  - limiting application of unused sick leave to years of service for pension calculation
  - strengthening anti-spiking provisions
  - reducing pension Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) benefits
  - establishing maximum annual pension benefits.

LWVIL OPPOSES restructuring the five state pension systems for **Tier 1 EMPLOYEES** hired before January 1, 2011 by increasing required employee contributions to state pension plans.

LWVIL SUPPORTS restructuring the five state pension systems for **Tier 1 RETIREES** by reducing pension Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) benefits.

LWVIL SUPPORTS expanding state revenue sources to cover pension obligations by

- applying the Illinois state income tax to all retirement income
- establishing a tax on services
- maintaining the current temporary 5% state income tax as permanent.\*

LWVIL OPPOSES legislation stretching the pension funding ramp beyond 2045.

The League SUPPORTS establishment of a State of Illinois contractual obligation to fund its five public pension systems to enable individual members to sue the State if Illinois does not pay its required pension obligation.

\*Note: The statement referring maintaining the temporary income tax increase passed in 2011 does not override the LWVIL's long-standing Fiscal Policy position supporting a progressive income tax with a graduated rate schedule (*LWVIL Where We Stand, page 72.*)

## GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM CONCURRENCE

The LWVIL Issues Committee voted on March 15, 2013 to recommend to the Board that the proposed concurrence with the Michigan League of Women Voters position on the Great Lakes Ecosystem be added to the Recommended Program for delegates to consider at the 2013 convention. The LWVIL Board agreed at the March 2013 meeting.

### Concurrence Proposal

The LWVIL delegates to the Lake Michigan League of Women Voters recommend the adoption - by concurrence - of the following state of Michigan LWV position on the Great Lakes Ecosystem, as stated below. (Note: Recommended changes to the original wording of the Michigan LWV's position are highlighted.)

### *GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM*

~~Adopted 1974, 1981; title amended 1985; Great Lakes Diversions & Consumptive Uses Position and Great Lakes System Position combined 1988; revised 2005~~

The League of Women Voters of ~~Michigan~~ **Illinois** supports preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem. We support the attainment and maintenance of high water quality standards throughout the Great Lakes Basin, with emphasis on water pollution prevention. Water conservation should be a high priority of all governments in the Basin.

### I. Protective Measures

To achieve protection and improvement of this valuable, international resource, the League of Women Voters of ~~Michigan~~ **Illinois** supports efforts to:

- Limit uses of "fragile," historical, cultural and scenic shoreline areas.
- Preserve wild and pristine areas within the watershed, with no new development in these special habitats without adherence to strict criteria as prescribed by federal, state, or local governments.
- Provide for appropriate recreational opportunities in and public access to sensitive areas without destruction or harm to the ecosystem.
- Protect the quality of the air and waters of the ecosystem by strict adherence to agricultural, industrial, residential, environmental, and commercial zoning regulations that prohibit the introduction of toxic or polluting discharges or detrimental land use techniques within the Basin.
- Protect the remaining dune formations. Enforce strict regulations of sand dune mining or development on the dunes.
- Strengthen upstream land management to eliminate sources of siltation and pollution.
- Control the invasion and spread of non-native aquatic and terrestrial nuisance species.

### II. Threats to the Ecosystem

The League of Women Voters of ~~Michigan~~ **Illinois** opposes the following activities as they can lead to the degradation of the special natural resources of the Great Lakes Ecosystem:

- Inefficient or excessive water uses. Proposals for new or increased withdrawals within the Basin, e.g. for agricultural or municipal uses, should be carefully evaluated before being permitted. Withdrawals should be regularly monitored for potential or actual damage to the ecosystem.
- Destruction of marshes and other wetlands throughout the watershed. Mitigation should be accepted only as a last resort. Mitigation proposals should be rigorously evaluated and projects should be strictly monitored to assure no net loss to the ecosystem.
- New or increased diversions or transfers by any means of Great Lakes waters and adjacent ground waters to a place outside the Basin. Projects already in place should be carefully monitored and restricted if there is evidence of damage to the ecosystem.
- Dredging and filling of river inlets, harbors, lakes or wetlands except for tightly- controlled, non-degrading and non-repetitive activities.
- Discharge to air or water of toxic pollutants and other material from industrial, agricultural, residential or commercial operations that may damage the ecosystem in violation of laws and ordinances.

### **III. Public Participation**

The League of Women Voters of ~~Michigan~~ Illinois supports informed and responsible action on behalf of the preservation of the Great Lakes Ecosystem. Relevant information should be readily available to the public. Opportunities for public input should be timely, accessible, convenient and well advertised.

### **IV. Role of Government**

The League of Women Voters of ~~Michigan~~ Illinois supports:

- Coordination of functions among various governmental agencies charged with protecting the Great Lakes and elimination of unnecessary overlap.
- Use of area-wide coordinated management plans and techniques in the solving of Great Lakes Ecosystem problems.
- Participation by all affected governments in the Basin in review and decision- making on Great Lakes agreements and projects, facilitated in open meetings and hearings.
- Strengthening of existing mechanisms for intergovernmental discussions and decision-making.
- Separation of responsibility for submitting recommendations for governmental projects from issuing permits for such projects.
- Monitoring and enforcement of treaties, ordinances, laws and master plans.

### **V. Research Priorities**

The League of Women Voters of ~~Michigan~~ Illinois believes that research on Great Lakes issues should focus on:

- Effective, non-toxic control and removal of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species.
- Restoration of health to the overall resource.
- Survival of native aquatic and terrestrial species and their nutrient sources.
- Continual testing of Great Lakes water quality for impact from the following: pesticides and fertilizers, resistant bacteria, persistent pharmaceuticals and other chemicals.
- Evaluation of water accountability systems, groundwater monitoring and water use planning and conservation efforts throughout the Basin.

League of Women Voters of Illinois Position on  
Charter Schools  
2001

***LWVIL Position:***

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes that:

- The Illinois State Board of Education should continue to monitor the progress of existing charters before supporting expansion, specifically looking for improvement in individual student test scores and achievement of the specific goals stated in the school's charter.
- Charters should be established by local school boards, with adequate provisions for public education and participation in the decision making process.
- An appeal process to the State Board of Education should remain in place as an option for charters who have been denied by their local school boards.

While we feel that advantages of charters largely outweigh the disadvantages, we have identified the following areas of concern:

- School funding. Charters do nothing to address the issue of equitable and adequate funding of education, including special education.
- Financial impact on underlying school districts, especially smaller districts. Charters place financial pressure on smaller districts by drawing money out of the traditional public schools.
- Privatization and profit-making. The LWVIL opposes the presence of private, for-profit companies in the governance of public education, as there could be a conflict between the interests of shareholders in the corporation and the citizens of the state.

LWVIL has also identified areas of opportunity resulting from charter schools:

1. Innovation. Charters have a mandate to share innovations in teaching methods, curricula and standards of assessment for all stakeholders.
2. Increased parental choice and involvement within the public school system.