

League of Women Voters of Louisiana State Program 2007-2009
Issues for Special Emphasis during 2007-2009
Ethics in Government, Elections and Campaign Finance, Affordable Housing

Support Positions

Government Policy Statement

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana believes that Louisiana State government policy, programs, and performance must meet these criteria:

- A. Fiscal accountability
- B. Competent personnel
- C. Coordination among agencies and levels of Government
- D. Adequate financing -Effective enforcement
- E. Home rule in determining local matters
- F. Well-defined channels for citizens' input and review.
- G. The League will take action to ensure these criteria in areas of program when such action is deemed advisable by the board.

Campaign Financing

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana believes that changes must be made in the methods of financing political campaigns in order to make our government more accountable, more representative and more responsible to all our citizens. The goals of a campaign financing system should be:

- A. To ensure the public's right to know
- B. To combat corruption and undue influence,
- C. To enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office.

Child Care Centers

- A. Mandatory licensing of child care centers to provide for minimum standards including:
 - 1. Safe, clean physical environment.
 - 2. Appropriately trained, qualified staff
 - 3. Suitable ratio of staff to children
 - 4. Minimum curriculum guidelines or program of Activities.
- B. The use of injunctive powers in the closure of childcare centers through civil as well as criminal procedure.

Collective Bargaining

Support of a comprehensive labor-management law on the state level regulating collective bargaining procedures for all categories of employees in the public sector.

Opposition to an unlimited right for public employees. Support of a limited right to strike for public employees under certain restrictions which promote the public health and safety and which insure complete utilization of impasse procedures.

Support of compulsory arbitration when impasse persists.

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Community Property Laws

Support for the principle of equal management of community property.

Constitution

Support of a state constitution that conforms to the following criteria:

- A. Should be fundamental law. free of statutory material.
- B. Should be written in clear and simple language.
- C. Should provide for the checks and balances among the three branches of government.
- D. Should be reasonably easy to amend.
- E. Should provide for majority rule as basic to our democratic form of government, along with protection of individual rights of citizens.
- F. Should allow for intergovernmental cooperation.

Correction System

The League believes the basic purposes of a correctional system are the protection of society and safe rehabilitation of the offender.

- A. In the adult system:
 - 1. Support of a comprehensive study of Louisiana sentencing law.
 - 2. Support of alternatives for incarceration including community-based treatment and expansion of the work release program.
 - 3. Mandatory pre-release planning for all inmates who are about to exit the Department of Corrections.
 - 4. Work release for all inmates who exit the Department of Corrections.
 - 5. Adequate funds to increase vocational/educational opportunities in the prison.
 - 6. Strict selection criteria in selecting inmates to be placed in community correctional centers.
 - 7. Community correctional programs to be implemented with restitution to victims by offenders.
 - 8. Utilization of reliable and proven risk scales by the judiciary.
 - 9. Support of a parole board and a pardon board with members professionally trained in fields related to criminal justice.
 - 10. Utilization of reliable and proven risk assessment scales by the parole board.
 - 11. Institution of, and adherence to, uniform parole criteria.
 - 12. Expansion of the probation and parole department.
 - 13. Probation fees to help defray the cost of probation services.
- B. Support of a coordinated and standardized system of juvenile corrections, financed at the state and local levels, providing for:
 - 1. Commitment to correctional institutions on the basis of:
 - a. Seriousness of crime
 - b. Number of crimes
 - c. Protection of society
 - d. Age of offender

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Correction System (continued)

2. Uniformity of treatment
3. Statewide collection of data according to a uniform system.
4. Care, education, protection of the rights of the child.
5. Diagnostic testing for serious habitual offenders.
6. Community correctional centers.
7. After care facilities.

Education

Support of measures to strengthen public education at all levels.

- A. Adequate funding of public schools.
 1. Emphasis on a high level (i.e. major proportion of cost born by the state) foundation program with allowance for the greater need of some pupils, provisions for meeting state mandated education achievement goals, and ample opportunities for citizen input.
 2. Equalization formula based on local support made uniform by equalization of assessments.
 3. Extension of state support to include capital outlay as well as operating expenditures.
- B. Support for appointment of state superintendent by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)
- C. Opposition to the use of public funds for non public schools.
- D. Support of age-appropriate sex education in public schools with parental permission.

Environmental Quality

The League believes that the financial cost of waste disposal is the primary responsibility of the generator and/or disposer under a strong state management program:

- A. Support of a natural and scenic rivers system.
- B. Preservation of areas of unique ecological systems, particularly the coastal wetlands and the Atchafalaya Basin.
- C. Protection of ground water integrity.

Issue for Emphasis:

Recycling and resource Recovery of Solid and/or Hazardous Waste:

The League of women Voters strongly supports public policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

Higher Education

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana believes that Louisiana should have one governing board for all institutions of higher education. The governing board should be composed of both elected and appointed members and should have representation from specific segments of the population.

Inheritance Laws

The underlying philosophy of the League's consensus on the issue of forced heirship refutes the reduction and/or preservation of large aggregations of wealth through inheritance laws. The League believes that forced heirship should be modified to:

- A. Give more protection to the surviving spouse and dependent children.
- B. Eliminate the forced heirship of parents to the separate property of their children or to

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Inheritance Laws (continued)

Property they have given their children.

- C. Exclude retirement, death, and disability benefits from forced heirship; such benefits should go to the surviving spouse.

Least-Cost Energy

The state of Louisiana should use least-cost energy concepts in development of energy policy.

Merit Selection of Judges

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana believes the state of Louisiana should choose its judges by a merit selection system, which would be fair, objective, and representative of the citizenry. In order to maximize public input, the judicial nominating process should not be dominated by the judiciary; therefore, judges should not serve as nominating commissioners nor should judges be appointed to chair the commissions. Groups whose primary purpose is to endorse or support candidates should not be apart of the nominating process.

Office of the Assessor

Support of measure to mandate professional qualifications for the assessor and assessor's staff.

Registration and Election Laws

Support of equitable registration and election laws that protect the right to vote of every citizen and their efficient implementation.

- A. Strictly enforced qualifications for commissioners to ensure competent personnel.
- B. More liberal absentee registration and voting requirements.
- C. Simple and clear ballots and election procedures.

Taxation/Public Finance

Support of measures to improve the state tax system.

- A. Sound administrative tax policies, conforming to criteria of tax certainty and stability, minimum cost of compliance and collections, and enforceability.
- B. Equitable taxation based on the principles of ability to pay and/or benefits received, with future revenues based on ability to pay.

Opposition to:

- A. Any state imposed limitations on local governments' tax rates for property, sales, or other taxes.
- B. State imposed exemption of manufacturing establishments from local property taxes.

The League affirms its support of elimination of the homestead exemption from property taxes and supports, as replacement, some form of circuit breaker, with relief to be granted primarily on the basis of income.