



2023-2025 PROGRAM PLANNING PACKET

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization which lobbies on public policy issues based on positions on which our members have studied and come to consensus (agreement). Program planning, assuring that agreement on positions is still valid, is an important part of being a grassroots organization.

In anticipation of the upcoming LWVNJ Convention, each local League is asked to review all present positions and recommend if we should retain, drop, or update each one. Leagues may also suggest new studies or consensus positions. The LWVNJ Board will use this information to develop 2023-2025 program recommendations for delegates to discuss and vote on at the **65th Biennial State Convention on June 10, 2023**. A leader from your League has received the link to an online form where all reports will be completed. Paper copies and attached versions of the program planning form will not be accepted.

Suggestions for your program planning meeting:

Involve as many members as possible and be creative in planning the meeting. There are 33 positions for you to examine and propose retaining, dropping or updating. You might want to take a straw poll of those positions you recommend retaining to help in focusing your available meeting time.

The leader(s) of the meeting should be familiar with the positions. Members should receive a copy of positions in brief and the definitions and criteria before the meeting.

If you are considering recommending a new study, a subgroup could bring a draft scope of the proposal to the members as a basis for the discussion.

Resources:

- [Study & Action 2021-2023](https://www.lwvnj.org/members) (LWVNJ) available at <https://www.lwvnj.org/members>
- [Program Recommendations Response Form](https://bit.ly/2023programplanning) - <https://bit.ly/2023programplanning>
- [Response Form Template](#) (*Note: This form is for you to print out and work on in your program planning meeting. Please do not return it.*)

DEFINITIONS, CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

Reaffirm a Position

- **Definition:** Member understanding and agreement exist. Members are committed to the position and will be involved in supporting LWVNJ's efforts to pursue the position's goals.
- **Criteria:** Reaffirm a position that you do not want to drop or update.

Drop a Position

- **Definition:** Position is not useful in its present form or is not supported by members. If delegates at convention drop a position, LWVNJ cannot use the position to lobby. Any future action must be taken on other related positions or will require a new study.
- **Criteria:** consider the following questions:
 - Is the position still useful today?
 - Does the position represent current member thinking?
 - Do members care enough about the position to take action and devote resources to it?
- **Guidelines:** List reasoning of members for recommendation to drop under "Comments." Remember that sometimes a position may be useful in the future even if its goals were attained. We keep the Lt. Governor position to push for the role to be better defined, for example, and in case future legislation were to try to abolish it.

Update a Position

- **Definition:** An update is a study of limited scope to reevaluate an existing position in light of new information, changed circumstances, and/or conflict with another existing position. Recommending an update is not just asking for information or the current status of a position - an update is a mini-study with expected changes to the position. An update usually takes a year to gather information, develop consensus questions and have local Leagues do the study.
- **Criteria:** consider the following questions:
 - Is new information available that might change the position?
 - Have the circumstances surrounding the position changed significantly?
 - Does the position conflict with another League position?
 - Are there gaps in the position?
- **Guidelines:**
 - The scope of the update must accompany your recommendation. The scope defines the parameters or limits of the update—the specific areas you wish to reexamine or expand and questions you want answered by the update.
 - Consider looking for allies among other local Leagues to ensure sufficient people resources to accomplish the limited study and to support it at convention.

No Decision

- **Definition:** If your League did not get to a topic or reach consensus on it, check "No Decision" and make a comment to describe why you chose this option.

New Public Policy Position

Decide if you wish to propose a consensus or concurrence process.

Consensus in the League is the process by which members, after study and group discussion, reach agreement. This is the normal study process for a new topic that has not previously been studied. Local Leagues will be involved in providing responses to study questions and comments on possible positions to the LWVNJ Study Committee. See below under "Study of possible new position" for specific procedures for recommending a study with consensus.

Concurrence is agreeing with the position of another state League that has already studied the issue in detail. You are proposing that the LWVNJ adopt that position by vote of delegates at convention without a new study. You will need to spell out clearly what the other League did and why you feel it is relevant to the LWVNJ.

Study of Possible New Position

- **Definition:** A study is a detailed process of member investigation and review that can lead to a new position upon which LWVNJ may take action. If you are proposing a study, please clearly indicate the topic and follow the guidelines below. A new study is usually a two-year process.
- **Criteria:** consider the following questions:
 - Assuming a two-year process to reach consensus, is the timing right to allow the League to act on the new position?
 - Will League involvement make a difference?
 - Is the issue one on which most League members will spend time and effort to study and come to consensus?
 - Are members in your local League able to lead or participate in a study committee?
- **Guidelines:**
 - Wording of a new study item should be easily understood, general enough for flexibility, yet specific enough to indicate the desired goals and scope.
 - A statement of scope of the study must accompany your recommendation. The scope defines the parameters of the study. It is an

explanation in more detail of the limits outlined in the wording. It shows how broad or narrow an approach you wish to take.

- Consider looking for allies among other local Leagues to ensure a sufficient number of people are available to research the issue, prepare meeting-ready materials for local Leagues, develop consensus questions, tally consensus responses and write the position.
- Note that a study must be designed to potentially reach varied or unexpected conclusions. Avoid proposing a study or scope that seem to already have a determinate conclusion built in.

POSITIONS IN BRIEF

Refer to [Study & Action 2021-2023](#) for the complete text and history of current positions.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

- **Death Penalty (2004):** Oppose capital punishment under any circumstances and for any type of crime. Life imprisonment without possibility of parole is the appropriate alternative.
- **Family Court (1977):** Support adequate funding and training of personnel.
- **Juvenile Justice (1975, 1996):** Support rehabilitation programs including a broad range of graduated sanctions and services and adequate funding for community based facilities. Support measures to reduce disproportionate representation of minority youth in the system and a single independent state level agency.
- **Mediation in the Municipal Courts (1989):** Support statewide implementation of mediation programs.

EDUCATION

- **Charter Schools (2000, 2015):** Support charter schools to encourage innovation within the public schools, while preserving the public character of public education. Traditional public school districts should be protected from arbitrary funding changes with respect to charter school funding.
- **Private School Choice (1995, 2007):** Oppose use of public funds to support students in non-public schools.
- **Public School Funding:** See Public Education Funding under Fiscal Policy.
- **School District Regionalization (1980, 1993, 2007):** Support decision-making by citizens of affected districts, so long as the right to equal educational access is not abridged. Support merger of some types of districts into a regional district, others into single K-12 districts, and elimination of districts with less than 500 students. Support revision of decision-making process for changes in tax-allocation formula. Oppose formation of countywide districts.
- **State Role in Achieving Quality Education (1993):** Support the sharing of responsibility between state and local school boards for educational outcomes;

support state assistance and monitoring; state-set curriculum content standards, and structural flexibility.

- **Teacher Certification and Professional Development (1994):** Support continuation and improvement of the alternative route to certification to assure substantive training, valid evaluation and appropriate support. Support periodic renewal of certification and requirement of continuing professional development.
- **Tenure (1982):** Support elimination of tenure for administrators. Retain tenure for teachers, but with modifications—strengthen evaluation process, expedite dismissal process.

FISCAL POLICY

- **Dedication of Taxes (1971, 1984, 1996):** Oppose the constitutional dedication of taxes.
- **Public Education Funding (1973, 1984, 1997, 2001):** Promote state fiscal measures to improve and equalize opportunities for public education including aid for school facilities and adequate support for children with special needs. Protect school districts from arbitrary funding changes. State education mandates should be used to meet educational standards, include significant state funding and adequate time for implementation.
- **Tax and Spending Limits (1981):** Support limits on taxation and spending by school districts, municipal, county and state governments.
- **Tax and Spending Policy (1971, 1996):** Promote sound fiscal policies through a progressive and equitable tax structure with adequate revenue to provide state and local services to meet the needs of New Jersey citizens. Support measures to reduce dependence on the local property tax and disparities in tax rates and services among communities.

GOVERNMENT

- **Campaign Finance (1974, 1987, 2001):** Support an open and accountable system including contribution and expenditure disclosure and limitations. Support a system of public and private funding.
- **Independent Commissions and Authorities (1989):** Support accountability, openness, coordination in planning between commissions and authorities and oversight by the executive branch.
- **Lieutenant Governor (2005, 2007):** Support office with defined responsibilities and succession for remainder of elected term.
- **Structures and Procedures (1972, 1987):** Support longer staggered terms and single member districts.
- **Voting Rights for Parolees and Probationers (2009):** Support restoring voting rights to all parolees and probationers who are U.S. citizens.

NATURAL RESOURCES

- **Planning for Growth (2005):** Support a comprehensive state planning policy for

land use decisions which includes open space conservation, habitat preservation for biodiversity, farmland preservation, provision of low and moderate-income housing consistent with environmental policies and historic preservation. Support watershed management, stormwater management, non-structural approaches to flood damage reduction in all river basins and education and enforcement programs to eliminate both non-point and point source pollution. Support a transportation planning process that provides all segments of the population with at least a basic minimum level of mobility, contributes to sound land use planning, is consistent with local and regional development goals, considers energy conservation and environmental protection and enhances the social and economic welfare of all state residents.

- **Coastal Zone (2015):** Support planning which leads to best possible outcomes for people, land, and coast.
- **Radioactive Waste (1983):** Public health and safety should be the primary considerations in managing radioactive wastes. Greater weight should be given to prevention of environmental degradation over economic constraints.
- **Solid Waste Management (1986):** Strategies for managing municipal solid waste should be implemented in the following order: source reduction, recycling, waste-to-energy and landfill.

SOCIAL POLICY

- **In State Tuition (2009):** Support extending instate tuition to unauthorized immigrants who graduate from NJ high schools and are admitted to NJ's public institutions of higher education.
- **Driving certificates for undocumented drivers (2019):** Support "driving certificates" or some other form of proof of driving validation to undocumented drivers. Support permitting and encouraging auto insurance providers to issue insurance coverage to holders of such driving certificates.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation (1977, 1979, 1985):** Support use of public monies to subsidize both operating and capital costs of public transportation. Note that the part of Transportation relevant to growth and planning was merged with Planning for Growth (above). Remaining as an independent position are the criteria for a public transportation system and ways of funding such a system.

WOMEN & FAMILY ISSUES

- **Child Care (1987):** Promote state efforts to increase the availability of quality child care service.
- **Domestic Violence (1991):** Support measures that protect victims and survivors.
- **Family Life Education (1982, 2001):** Support the teaching of

comprehensive family life education in the public schools.

- **Human Trafficking (2013):** Oppose all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Support programs and services to combat human trafficking, training for law enforcement, medical and other professionals, and education on internet safety.
- **Status of Women (1979):** Promote laws that protect the rights of women. Support revisions of property and inheritance laws, expeditious and less costly divorce procedures, equitable distribution statutes, strengthening of laws regarding disclosure of assets and methods for collecting support payments.
- **Reproductive Rights/Public Policy on Abortion (1982):** Support the right of the individual to make the choice of whether or not to terminate a pregnancy.
- **Sexual Assaults in the College Community (2017):** Support policies and legislative educational programs that define, prevent, report, and combat inappropriate sexual misconduct as well as sexual assault and rape against both women and men within the college campus community. Support preventive measures that begin early, address attitudes such as "rape culture," and emphasize the importance of consent. We also believe that support, counseling, and legal protection must be provided for victims.