

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ARIZONA
ACTION AGENDA 2015-2017

GOVERNMENT

ARIZONA ELECTION LAW

Consensus 1972; revised 1973, 1991; Reviewed 1995, Amended 2009

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports an accessible system of registration and election, with uniform and standardized procedures throughout the state. Therefore, the League supports:

- Mail-in registration procedures, but opposes Election Day registration at the polls as an invitation to fraud.
- Increase in pay for legislators.
- Four-year terms for State Legislators, with no limit on the number of terms which they may serve,
- An income tax check-off to provide partial funding of legislative elections through the subsidy of some television time for issue discussion by ballot qualified candidates.
- A requirement for complete financial disclosure by candidates for public office.
- A cap on gifts to public officials, and reporting of all gifts.
- Prohibiting elected officials lobbying for remuneration of any kind for at least one year after leaving office.
- Prohibiting elected officials from using surplus campaign funds for personal use, or from taking them along when leaving office.
- All government agencies being required to report all their lobbying activities, expenditures and gifts to public officials.
- The monitoring of vote counting in state and local elections.

ELECTION SYSTEMS REFORM

Consensus 2005; Amended 2008, 2011

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes in the election system principle of greater vote representation. The LWVAZ maintains that election system reform that provides a stronger voice for the greatest number of voters should have a positive effect on voter participation. Therefore, the LWVAZ:

- Supports changing the present election systems so that they more accurately represent the wishes of voters: Adopting the Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) system for single seat races; adopting proportional representation for multi-seat races, specifically Ranked Choice Voting.
- Believes that education of the voting public is important to election systems.
- Supports giving Arizona voters the option of more choice among election systems.

LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING

Consensus: 1967; Revised: 1979, 1995, 2005, Amended 2011

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports measures to ensure the regular redistricting of Arizona legislative and congressional districts on an "equal population" basis. The LWVAZ supports:

- The retention of an independent commission to redistrict legislative and congressional districts at regular intervals, subject to judicial review. The Legislature itself should not be the reapportioning agency.
- Legislative districts that provide more equitable representation, more accountability and responsibility, more competitive elections, and closer contact with constituents. (Footnote: To allow for greater flexibility, this position was amended on March 5, 2005, by removing the words "single member." As background information, three points were made: 1) impacts may differ in rural and urban districts, 2) the change is neither an automatic endorsement for multi-member districts nor an automatic opposition to single member districts, 3) even members who strongly favor multi-member districts often do so only when such districts are accompanied by other electoral changes.)

INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

Consensus: 1976; Reviewed 1995, 2003; Revised 2004

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes in the constitutional right of the people to enact direct legislation (enacting, amending, or repealing legislative acts and amending the Arizona Constitution); therefore, the League supports:

- The requirement that only qualified electors (registered voters) may sign any initiative, referendum or recall petition.

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- The reduction of the required number of signatures on a statutory initiative petition to qualify placing it on the ballot from ten per-cent to not more than eight per-cent of the votes cast for governor at the last gubernatorial election.
- The amendment of the constitution to limit the power of the Legislature to repeal or amend the initiative or referendum measures by means such as requiring more than just majority approval, or setting a minimum time limit before the Legislature can act on such measures, or some other limitation short of complete elimination of power.
- Removal of the governor's power to veto initiative or referendum measures.
- Identification of funding sources (for initiatives), if practicable.
- The disclosure of financial contributions to committees supporting and opposing an initiative and referendum.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Concurrence 1977; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports an amendment to the Arizona Constitution to permit counties to decide, by a vote of the people in each county, the governmental structure which best meets county needs.

The LWV of Metropolitan Phoenix supports home rule for Maricopa County. The LWV of Greater Tucson supports a long term goal of consolidated government for Pima County. The League position supporting local option for county governmental structure gives the LWVAZ a position from which to lobby, but does not restrict other local Leagues from positions they may take regarding their own county government.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Consensus 1983; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that the political process must be open, equitable and honest. The process must provide opportunity for maximum citizen participation. There should be limits on the size and type of campaign contributions. There should be full disclosure of contributions and expenditures to combat undue influence in the electoral and governmental processes.

ARIZONA EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

Consensus 1963; revised 1965, 1968, 1969, 1974, 1985; reviewed 1995, New Consensus 2013

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports measures to strengthen the executive branch of state government, and to integrate its administration by centralizing authority and responsibility in the governor's office.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that a clear line of succession in the Executive Branch of the State of Arizona should be more obvious to the public than it is in the current system where the Secretary of State assumes the role of Governor in times of absence, removal, resignation, death or other such changes. To avoid mid-term changes in party, continuity problems or policy reversals, League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the creation of an Office of Lieutenant Governor with duties separate from that of the Secretary of State.

In addition, the League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that the governor and the elected office which is next in line of succession to the governor, should run on the same party ticket. If that office continues to be held by the Secretary of State, League of Women Voters Arizona strongly believe that all partisan aspects of elections should be removed from the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State and managed by an independent body/commission.

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

Consensus 1983; Reviewed 1995; Revised 2011

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports adequate protection and representation of consumers, including residential consumers, in the Arizona Corporation Commission process and supports measures to encourage conservation as well as the development and use of renewable energy sources.

JUDICIAL

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Consensus 1999

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports early intervention programs beginning in elementary schools with the help of:

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- counselors, social workers, psychologists, volunteers in school programs and individualized programs, including those that foster self-esteem,
- clinics on parenting skill
- conflict resolution skills training,
- drug education.
- Funding for the above should come from federal, state, local, private and corporate sources.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports measures for adequate funding with emphasis on prevention, rehabilitation, incarceration and non-incarceration facilities, and intervention programs, trained personnel and education for parents of problem children. State funding should be dispersed to the local levels.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that programs and policies should be adopted which promote rehabilitation and education within the Juvenile Justice system and should include:

- schooling while in detention,
- counseling for the family and the individual while in detention,
- alternative living and educational programs and experiences to prevent and discontinue gang involvement.

The League Women Voters of Arizona believes that for the protection of the community and schools, delinquent children should:

- receive swift and firm justice,
- be removed from dysfunctional homes after family intervention and long-term family counseling,
- and be treated as an individual according to the age, need and type of crime and be sent first to juvenile court.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports laws that include:

- swift punishment for weapon possession by juveniles,
- swift and harsh punishment of adults who provide weapons to juveniles,
- the exchange of records among schools, court and social agencies but not to the public or the media,
- a juvenile hearing before transfer to adult court.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the concept of an approach to juvenile problems through Restorative Justice Programs, which give priority to and accountability for wrongdoing by repairing the damage or harm done to victims and the community through a process of victim involvement, community participation, mediation and reparation. Skilled mediators should be involved in this process.

JUDICIAL SELECTION AND TENURE

Consensus 1969; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the selection of judges by appointment, with voter approval for retention; adequate judicial salaries; longer terms; higher qualifications for justices of the peace and magistrates; a judicial nominating commission, responsible to the governor; and a competency review commission.

To assure that our judges are free of political bias and possessed of the proper qualities of temperament and intellect, and yet retain ultimate control of the courts in the hands of the people;

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports:

- Appointment of judges by the governor from list of qualified nominees submitted by a bipartisan commission of legal and lay members.
- Retention of a judge in office, after an established period of time, only by a "yes" vote of the people, a "no" vote requiring a new appointment by the governor.

(This system of judicial selection and tenure was implemented in Pima, Maricopa and Pinal counties after they reached the constitutionally required population of 250,000. Counties not having reached that population can adopt merit selection by a vote of their electorate. Although we have basically accomplished our goal, we retain the position because in each session of the Legislature, there are efforts to return to the old elective system.)

LOWER COURT REFORM

Concurrence 1983; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports legislation which would give Arizona counties the option to consolidate their lower courts in order to promote uniformity in the administration and quality of justice, and effectiveness and efficiency in court administration.

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

Concurrence 1983; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes in the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

SOCIAL POLICY

HUMAN NEEDS

Consensus 1971; Revised 1985; Reviewed 1995, Amended 2007

The League of Women of Arizona supports a state system that provides for a positive program to assist the economically disadvantaged in obtaining a greater measure of financial, physical and personal well-being, with emphasis on meeting basic human needs rather than on maintaining minimum expenditures.

In order to assist persons in need, to assure the basic essentials of health and adequate standards of living, reduce dependency, and break the welfare cycle, the state of Arizona should:

- Assure supportive programs and services integrated with those for the general public on an ability-to-pay basis, including legal services, comprehensive health care, child care, transportation, family planning, home management, family counseling, vocational training, and educational enrichment.
- Work with private and public agencies, and utilize community services to the fullest.
- Encourage recipients to work when possible, with child care, counseling, job training and financial incentives available and to participate in program development and implementation
- Disseminate information on welfare programs and interpret the needs of the community to the public.
- Provide adequate funds for capable, qualified staff, manageable case loads, information and referral services, and accessible office facilities.
- Administer funds and programs wisely, according to sound management and accounting principles, while preserving the rights and dignity of recipients.

VICTIMIZATION OF CHILDREN AND INTRAFAMILIAL ABUSE

Adopted 1985; Revised 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that government, both state and local, including the state legislature and state and local agencies, should assure that necessary services are readily available to serve and protect the abused. These persons should be the focus of careful and timely long-range planning by these agencies and by the courts.

Adequate resource allocations shall be made within child protective and state agency budgets, within police and law enforcement budgets, and within the court system to assure the proper training and education of those who deal with these issues. The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports violence prevention programs in all communities and action to support:

- Public and private development and coordination of programs that emphasize the primary prevention of violence.
- The active role of government and social institutions in preventing violent behavior.
- The allocation of public monies in government programs to prevent violence.

EDUCATION

PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE

Consensus 1975, 1979; Reviewed 1995; Revised 1997; Concurrence 1999; Restated 2000

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports a funding plan for public education that enhances the equal opportunity of all students. Such a plan should:

- Provide for the equitable distribution of state funds, including capital funding.
- Establish criteria for a quality education for all students prior to determining the formula for the distribution of monies.
- Recognize the differences in the needs of school districts.
- Provide funds for the special needs of school districts.

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- Include measures to equalize the ability of school districts to finance those portions of their budgets for which they are responsible on the local level.
- Require governmental entities that establish mandated programs to continue funding for duration of the project.
- Budget for transportation, social services and special education needs separately from base maintenance and operation support.
- Ensure that all schools using public funds, such as Charters, are held as fiscally accountable as are schools in regular established public school districts.

FUNDING SOURCES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The League of Women Voters of Arizona recognizes the inequities of the local school property tax. Therefore, the League supports these measures:

- Decrease reliance on the local school district property tax.
- Utilize statewide taxes for support of public school education.
- Require development impact fees to be paid to local school districts.
- Continue use of trust land monies.
- Maintain a policy of local control on spending decisions.
- New monies should be additional funds and not supplant present state funding.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona also supports the following aspects of funding for public schools:

- School districts in Arizona retain ability to bond for building or renovation of schools and for capital expenditures.
- School districts retain the ability to hold override elections.
- Bond and override elections are determined by a simple majority vote.
- Legislature levies taxes for schools by a simple majority vote.
- Realistic allowances are made for inflation.
- Continued centralized collection and distribution of funding to local school districts, enabling distribution of these funds to provide: 1) a certain basic amount of money for each student, 2) financing over and above the basic amount to ensure equal opportunity for each child, 3) equal or equivalent maintenance of buildings, equal or equivalent supplies, 4) strong leadership and quality teaching.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the principle that the governmental entity closest to the school district constituency can best make decisions that will enhance the equal educational opportunity of all students. Therefore, the League suggests these policies:

- The state distributes public school funds equitably to school districts and sets minimal general educational guidelines without inhibiting local decision making.
- Local school districts determine how funds are allocated in school district budgets.
- Citizen participation is essential, including funding and representative decision making.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports policies and practices that encourage responsive government and informed citizen participation in the school district budgeting process. Therefore, the League supports the following:

- The school district budget format should call for specific information, such as program detail, salary schedules, and capital improvement programs.
- The school district budgeting schedule should include citizen input in time to allow for citizen influence on the allocation of funds in the budget.
- Advisory committees, open to all citizens in the school district community, should provide citizen input into the budgetary process.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

The League of Women Voters of Arizona is also committed to these goals:

- Public funds should be used only for public schools and not for vouchers to private schools, including tuition tax credits, waivers, or direct payments to parents for school expenses of their children.
- Reorganization of any school districts should be to enhance the educational opportunities of all students.
- Funding for charter schools may negatively impact funds available to local school districts and standardized sequential curriculum may not be utilized.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Concurrence 1999; Concurrence 2013

- Charter schools are public schools that are privately operated.
- Charter schools should be held to the same high standards as all Arizona public schools.

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- All public schools should be permitted and encouraged to innovate. They must be allowed flexibility on class size, length of school day, teaching techniques, and special subject focus (such as science, the arts, technology).
- Charter schools need more initial direction as they are started and organized to comply with legal requirements.
- All public school teachers must be well qualified.
- The curriculum must comply with the Arizona State Standards. Test score results and school ranking must be easily available to the public.
- Academic evaluation of charter and traditional public schools needs to be equitable. However, there is still insufficient oversight of charter schools. The state staff should be adequate to monitor student achievement.
- Schools that close must arrange for an orderly transfer of students and return to the State available money and property that has been given to them from the State's General Fund.
- The Arizona Constitution states that all public schools must be funded for proper maintenance, improvement, and development. It is imperative that sufficient funding be provided to assure steady progress in teaching and learning. This would better prepare students with the tools to thrive in a competitive and changing world.
- Open enrollment has given parents and students more options for school choice. However, the availability of public information must be more accessible to all.
- A better tracking system of students is even more important due to school choice or open enrollment.

HIGH-STAKES TESTING (AIMS -Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards)

Consensus 2005

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes that no single "high-stakes" test (AIMS) should be the deciding factor for graduation from high school. The LWVAZ supports a diploma being awarded to students who satisfactorily complete their course work.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the use of AIMS (or other government-mandated test) for the following purposes:

- Identifying and alleviating students' academic difficulties, in a timely manner;
- Identifying necessary changes in curriculum, methods, and materials.

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes it is important for government-mandated tests to be well-crafted, meaningful, and well-matched with the Arizona Standards. Therefore the LWVAZ supports the following:

- Utilizing Arizona educators from K-12 to develop and write the questions and educators from institutions of higher learning to evaluate the tests in their areas of expertise.
- Validating the tests to be sure they reflect the Arizona Standards and appropriate grade levels.

If "high-stakes" testing for high school graduation continues in Arizona, the LWVAZ recognizes that provisions need to be made for those who fail. Therefore, the LWVAZ supports retesting students who fail AIMS during their high school years.

Curricula areas not specifically tested on AIMS (such as vocational/technical/career education, visual and performing arts, social studies, science, health and physical education) shall be encouraged and shall not be curtailed. (Concurrence 2005)

NATURAL RESOURCES

LAND USE

Consensus 1975; Reviewed 1995

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports:

- Action to achieve a physical environment beneficial to life, with emphasis on achieving an optimum balance between human needs and the carrying capacity of the land and its resources.
- Statewide land use planning which should include economic, social and environmental components, basic services, transportation, new concepts of community design, the best use of resource conservation measures in land use planning, with emphasis on the effects of population growth and distribution.
- Measures to preserve open space and natural habitat, identify and regulate areas of critical concern, including fragile areas, historic areas, riparian habitats, renewable resource lands, and natural hazard lands.

- Statewide authority over areas and activities outside of local government jurisdiction, or which their governmental bodies fail to regulate.
- Protection of private property in accordance with the Fifth Amendment, but retaining the government's right to regulate the use of land through its power to protect the public health, welfare and safety; the decision whether a regulation constitutes a partial taking should be determined by the courts.
- Requirements for evaluation of economic, social and environmental impacts of major land use projects, whether initiated by government agencies or by private interests.
- Policies which assure the quality of the environment for people of all economic levels.
- Increased coordination and communication among land use agencies at all levels of government, and between those agencies and the public.
- Requiring any boards, commissions or agencies having authority or responsibility over land use planning to be comprised of individuals representing a balance of diverse citizen interests and concerns.
- Public input into all stages of planning and decision making.
- Increased technical and financial assistance to localities for growth management: encouragement of local communities to use innovative planning and regulatory techniques, and to incorporate measures to conserve energy, integrate transportation planning, consider availability of water and other resources.

WATER

Consensus 1975, 1979; Revised 1995, Amended 2009

The League of Women Voters of Arizona supports the following goals:

Water resource management should ensure:

- The sustainability and long term productivity of water resources of the state and their future availability at reasonable costs. Reasonable cost is defined as costs that fairly and accurately reflect the value of this precious resource.
- The equitable utilization of water resources.
- Conservation of water resources.
- Prevention of harmful contamination of our surface and groundwater supplies from all sources.
- Coordination at all levels of government (federal, state and local) in planning for and managing water resources.
- Availability of detailed information on all groundwater withdrawal and hydraulic characteristics of aquifers.
- Energy consideration to be included as part of any water management plan.
- Public participation at all levels of water resource management planning.

Arizona water laws should:

- Reflect the hydrologic cycle and treat all water as interrelated.
- Recognize and provide for physical differences between various areas of the state.
- Define and quantify ground and surface rights.
- Consider priority of use and coordination of planning for water and land if water rights are transferred.
- Recognize riparian habitats as beneficial use.
- Assure that riparian habitats and in-stream flows are protected when any new water rights are granted, or when there are water exchanges or changed uses.
- Clarify and strengthen in-stream flow rights.
- Provide for incentives for stream/habitat restoration.
- Provide authority to:
 - Monitor water use;
 - Limit non-beneficial or wasteful use;
 - Limit new water uses in areas of long-term shortages;
 - Decide which users should have priorities in times of shortages.

(The administration of the above should be determined at the state level, with emphasis on implementation and enforcement at the local or regional level.)

- Require conservation of water by large individual users, such as large industries and agricultural entities, and encourage conservation by all other users. Tax incentives should be utilized.

NEW UPDATES

1. A review/update of the position on education funding.
2. An update of the election Law and Election Systems positions
3. An update of the Campaign Finance position after completion of the LWVUS Campaign Finance position