

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA POSITIONS, RESOLUTIONS, AND PRIORITIES 2015 – 2017

POSITIONS

CHILD WELFARE

"SUPPORT OF PROGRAMS AND POLICIES THAT ENSURE QUALITY SERVICES, PERSONNEL, FINANCING AND TRAINING AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES."

LWVSC supports:

1. The expansion of the supply of affordable licensed and quality child care for all who need it to increase access to employment, to prevent and reduce poverty, and to better prepare children for a lifetime of learning.

LWVSC supports the following specific actions with the intention that child care providers providing quality care not be priced out of the market by these actions.

- a. The state should require that all child care homes in the state that are regulated by the SC Department of Social Services (SCDSS) meet, at a minimum, licensing regulations.
 - b. The state should adopt a system that rates levels of quality in a manner more reflective of quality and more easily understood by policy makers and public.
 - c. SCDSS child care center licensing regulations should be changed to include limitations on group size (the number of children in a room) and lower child-to staff ratios.
 - d. The state should initiate a campaign to inform employers about the benefits of employer-supported child care, and the tax credits available to them.
 - e. The state should follow Head Start's lead and target a date by which all, or a portion of, child care staff will have an Associate Degree in Early Childhood.
 - f. The state should investigate offering a state-sponsored health benefits plan to all child care workers.
 - g. State agencies should provide child care facilities for their employee's children.
 - h. In order for the legislature to understand the importance of these proposals and provide necessary support, efforts must be made to educate them about the importance of quality child care.
2. Services and policies that ensure that all children are free from abuse and neglect.
 3. Services and policies that ensure children's physical, emotional, educational and health needs are met.
 4. Services and policies that ensure timely, permanent and appropriate placement for children in State custody and ensure timely placement in pre-adoptive homes.
 5. The Children's Policy of South Carolina (Section 20-7-20 of the Children's Code) which consists of the following:
 - a. A children's policy is hereby established by this state.

- b. This policy shall be interpreted in conjunction with all relevant laws and regulations and shall apply to all children who have need of services including, but not limited to, those mentally, socially, emotionally, physically, developmentally, culturally, educationally, and economically disadvantaged or handicapped, those dependent, neglected, abused or exploited, and those who by their circumstance or action violate the laws of the state and are found to be in need of treatment of rehabilitation.
- c. It shall be the policy of this state to concentrate on the prevention of children's problems as the most important strategy that can be planned and implemented on behalf of children and their families. The state shall encourage community involvement in the provision of children's services including, as an integral part, local government public and private voluntary groups, public and private non-profit groups and private-for-profit groups in order to encourage and provide innovative strategies for children's services. To maximize resources in providing services to children in need, all agencies providing services to children shall develop methods to coordinate their services and resources. For children with multiple needs, the furtherance of this policy requires all children's services agencies to recognize that their jurisdiction in meeting these children's needs is not mutually exclusive. Support the implementation of an automated system for Child Support Enforcement.
- d. When children or their families request help, state and local government resources shall be utilized to complement community efforts to help meet the needs of children by aiding in the prevention and resolution of their problems. The state shall direct its efforts first to strengthen and encourage family life as the most appropriate environment for the care and nurturing of children. To this end, the state shall assist and encourage families to utilize all available resources. For children in need of services, care and guidance, the state shall secure those services as are needed to serve the emotional, mental, and physical welfare of children and the best interest of the community, preferably in their homes or the least restrictive environment possible. When children must be placed in care away from their homes, the state shall ensure that they are protected against any harmful effects resulting from the temporary or permanent inability of parents to provide care and protection for their children. It is the policy of this state to reunite the child with its family in a timely manner, whether or not the child has been placed in the care of the state voluntarily. When children must be permanently removed from their homes, they shall be placed in adoptive homes so that they may become members of a family by legal adoption or, absent that possibility, other permanent settings.
- e. The children's policy provided for in this article shall be implemented through the cooperate efforts of state, county and municipal legislation, judicial and executive branches, as well as other public and private resources. Where resources are limited, services shall be targeted to those children in greatest need.
- f. In order to carry out this policy each state agency, department, institution, committee and commission which is concerned or responsible for children shall submit, as a part of its annual budget request, a comprehensive statement of how its program contributed to the implementation of this policy. This statement shall include, but not be limited to, a listing of programs and how they are placed in priority and a summary of the expenses incurred for the administration of children's services.

Background/Action: LWVSC conventions in 1995 and 1997 called for revisiting and revising an older position on child welfare that had been adopted in the 1970s. A revised draft was offered at the 1999 convention, but delegates voted to retain the existing Child Welfare position until local Leagues could study and respond to the proposed revision. The LWVSC Board approved revised wording and agreed to accept the recommendation from the Child Welfare group to focus on studying child care services in the following year. The consensus on child care services was approved at State Council in 2002. The 2009 LWVSC convention expanded Item #4 to specify that, for

a child in state custody, placement should be appropriate and in the best interest of the child. In 2015 “educational” was added to the needs specified in number 3.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

“Support for improvements in function and oversight of the Department of Corrections to include attention to the offender’s responsibility to the community and his/her return to the community.”

LWVSC Supports:

1. Court commitment policies that encourage utilization of alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders. Efforts to reduce the anticipated prison population through the utilization of various alternatives to incarceration, which include: Pre-trial intervention (PTI) programs; Pre-sentence investigations (PSI); Youthful Offender Act provisions; shock incarceration; day treatment programs; community treatment programs for drug and alcohol offenders; weekend/overnight/home detention; residential and nonresidential restitution programs.
2. The diversion of mentally handicapped and mentally ill persons to community treatment service.
3. Full funding for rehabilitation, re-entry, pre-release and work release programs that facilitate the inmate’s re-entry into the community as a productive citizen.
4. Prison industry programs that enable inmates to contribute to or support the costs of their incarceration and prepare them for post-prison employment.
5. The inclusion of successful completion of academic, vocational, or technical education courses to be credited toward the reduction of an inmate’s term of incarceration.
6. A requirement that state human service agencies incorporate services to the inmate population and their families in their agency plans.
7. A mandatory cost-impact review for any legislation that would affect the inmate population.
8. The construction of regionally-sited correctional facilities and improvement of existing facilities as needed to relieve overcrowding and to adequately house increases in the prison population. Inmate labor should be used, provided that appropriate training is given to the
 1. inmates; that the inmates are paid a suitable wage for their labor, and that those involved are required to contribute a portion of their wages to their own maintenance costs, to support their families, and to pay restitution as required.
9. Decriminalization of victimless crimes as a means of reducing the prison population.
10. Illegal drug use should be considered a public health issue. Drug use and addiction should be addressed by substance abuse treatment and education programs instead of incarceration.
11. Frequent and thorough oversight and evaluation of staff, programs, and facilities, both public and private

JUVENILE JUSTICE

“Support for improvements in function and oversight of the Department of Juvenile Justice to include attention to the offender’s responsibility to the community and his/her return to the community.”

1. A juvenile justice system that has as its primary purpose the rehabilitation, safety and well-being of the offender.
2. A system that promotes the juvenile’s understanding of the harm done and his/her responsibility to make amends to the victim and the community, emphasizes alternatives to detention or commitment, and promotes the protection of the community and the juvenile’s successful re-entry into the community.
3. A juvenile justice system that includes the following features:
 - a. Prevention and early intervention programs
 - b. Fair and impartial treatment of all offenders
 - c. Early assessment of the needs of the juveniles
 - d. Programs that are age and gender appropriate
 - e. A variety of services including mental health, counseling and vocational and educational services
 - f. Family and community involvement, including positive parenting programs
4. Adequate funding and appropriately trained staff for programs.
5. Frequent and thorough oversight and evaluation of staff, programs and facilities, both public and private.
6. Reserving the option of charging juveniles as adults, particularly the younger ones, for the most heinous crimes and only as a last resort.

Background /Action: *Adopted in 1979, the list of ways to reduce prison population was expanded in 1992. The list of positions was reprioritized at the direction of the 1997 convention. In 1999, the title of this position was changed from “Corrections” to “Criminal Justice” as more appropriate for its content. In 2002-3, a task force studied Juvenile Justice and recommended that we concur with the Colorado League position. The approval of this position was completed in November 2003 and “Juvenile Justice” was added to the heading. At Convention 2007, Criminal Justice, specifically rehabilitation and education programs to promote inmate reentry into society and to reduce recidivism, was adopted as an action priority for the 2007-2009 biennium. In 2007-2009, LWVSC’s focus included support for sentencing reform and opposition to abolition of parole. Convention 2009 readopted Criminal Justice as a priority issue. Item #10 under Adult Offenders was adopted by concurrence at the 2011 State League Convention, based on a study of illegal drug use by the Charleston League. In 2015 Criminal and Juvenile Justice were separated and executive summaries were amended accordingly.*

EDUCATION

“Support of public state-supported education at all levels which is high quality, effective, Equitable, fully funded and accountable.”

LWVSC supports:

GOVERNANCE

Early Childhood (EC) through grade 12

1. A State Board of Education, with the majority of members elected by the legislature on the “one-person-one-vote” principle and the remainder appointed by the Governor.
2. Public election of the State Superintendent of Education.
3. Non-partisan election of local board of education members for four-year terms with limited self-succession.
4. Formulation and publication of educational policy and goals by state and local boards as a basis for selection and evaluation of content, methods and organizational patterns reflecting these goals and encouraging innovation and experimentation.
5. Consolidation of services and programs of small schools and consolidation of small school districts when educationally feasible.
6. Changes in the structures of the school board and/or consolidating, splitting, or redrawing school district lines should be subject to a referendum by the voters in the affected school district(s).

Post Secondary

7. Legislative election and gubernatorial appointment of institutional governing boards broadly representative of the state population as to race and gender.
8. Application of the rules of dual office holding to institutional governing boards.
9. Involvement of the Commission on Higher Education and the institutions in statewide planning and assessment; periodic outside evaluation as a further measure of accountability.

Adult Education

10. Governance and oversight of adult education programs by the State Department of Education, with programs administered by local school districts, regional adult education technical assistance centers, community organizations, and faith-based organizations.
11. Adult education programs which are accessible to residents throughout each county in South Carolina.

FUNDING

All Levels (Early Childhood - 12, Post Secondary)

12. Assumption by the state of the greatest share of financial responsibility for public education, allowing some local initiative and keeping local taxes (EC - 12) and tuition (post secondary) within equitable bounds.

13. Faculty compensation competitive with neighboring states, and state appropriations sufficient to meet state mandated increases in salaries and fringe benefits.

14. State aid to local districts for school construction and to post secondary institutions through financing instructional facilities with general obligation bonds.

Early Childhood - 12

15. State grants at a level sufficient to maintain effective public education, supplemented by variable local grants, working toward equal educational opportunity for all.

16. Administration of funds decided on the local level with strong state guidelines, ensuring fiscal effectiveness.

17. Protection of funds legally designated for specific programs.

18. Accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools as mandatory for all schools using public funds.

19. Amending the state constitution to prohibit the use of state funds for direct or indirect support of private education.

Post Secondary

20. Indexing of in-state tuition based on the actual cost of education, the state bearing 80% of cost and the student 20% at all institutions, while allowing individual institutions to set out-of-state tuition at 200% or more of in-state tuition and fees

Adult Education

21. Adequate State funding to increase the percentage of full time teachers in high school diploma programs and career transition specialists for students in adult education programs;

22. Increasing the per student allocation for adult education students (ages 17-21 years) in diploma programs to an amount that is adequate to ensure quality and which compares favorably to the per student allocation for those enrolled in public high schools;

(See section on "Taxation" for additional positions affecting the funding of education).

EFFECTIVE EDUCATION

In addition to sound principles of governance and funding as conducive to effective education, LWVSC supports:

Early Childhood – 12

23. The provisions of the Education Finance Act (EFA) and the Education Improvement Act

(EIA) which provide compulsory (K - 12), effective, equitable and accountable education to all students.

24. Effective partnerships between schools and parents, the community, and business.
25. Ample variation in curriculum to meet individual educational needs of all students.
26. Continued offering of full day kindergarten, expansion of full day 4-K to all area of the state, and expansion of pre-school with small class size, low pupil-teacher ratio, aides and developmentally appropriate programs, and with parental choice of full day or half day.
27. Offering to educators a wide variety of support before and during evaluation.
28. Elimination of corporal punishment, with the promotion of more effective and positive methods of discipline.
29. Early identification of students who are at risk for dropping out of school.
30. Recognizing that the teacher is the most important school-based component of academic achievement, school districts should implement a comprehensive teacher evaluation. The fair and comprehensive evaluation system should:
 - Assure that all teachers are evaluated on a regular basis;
 - Include three or more qualitative rating categories to identify and retain effective teachers (for example, categories of : Highly Effective, Effective, Needs Improvement, rather than letter grades);
 - Include student progress as one of the factors used for rating teacher effectiveness;
 - Use clearly defined, widely accepted standards, and consistent, well-trained evaluators;
 - Use teachers in developing and implementing the evaluation system;
 - Provide feedback to teachers to help them develop skills and support decisions for retention, dismissal and assignments;
 - Be equitably and fully funded across the state's public school systems.
 - Support evidence-based early literacy programs to ensure that children reach school ready to read.

Post Secondary

31. The establishment and expansion of research programs to include those having a direct, positive impact on economic development, education, health or welfare in this state.

Adult Education

32. Availability of a variety of adult education programs and classes (such as literacy, English as a second language, pre-GED and GED preparation, high school diploma, computer literacy, career readiness), as well as on-line and virtual learning programs, to meet respective needs of South Carolina's diverse population.
33. Local adult education partnerships with higher education and technical education institutions, as well as businesses, community organizations, and other government entities to assist in carrying out the mission of adult education.

- 34. Available child development facilities and care for children of adult education parents while they are attending adult education classes.
- 35. Available, affordable transportation assistance to/from adult education sites for adult education students.
- 36. Access to adult education classes in a wide variety of community locations, including State Department of Corrections facilities, city and county jails, vocational rehabilitation centers, and One Stop Centers.

All levels (EC - 12, Post Secondary, Adult Education)

- 37. Effective administration, leadership and management, with strict quality controls.

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

- 38. Constitutionality: Charter Schools should be under the control of publicly elected or publicly appointed school officials. They may receive public funding only if they meet constitutional requirements to qualify as public schools. They must be non-religious and non-sectarian in programs, admissions policies and employment practices.
- 39. Equal Access: Charter Schools must maintain racial and ethnic balance unless imbalances are justified by a special program. They must not practice discrimination based on disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, need for special education, or economic status. Free transportation must be provided within the territorial jurisdiction of the Charter School. There should be no requirements for parental participation or support which might limit access for minority or disadvantaged students.
- 40. Accountability: Charter Schools must be accountable in terms of stated learning objectives, methods of assessment, and reporting of assessment results. They must regularly report to the public on the use of funds. The South Carolina Public Charter School District must be the approving body for charter school applications but there should be an appeals process for a denied or revoked Charter School application.

Background/Action: Education was voted number one action item at LWVSC conventions from 2003-2009. Action and monitoring have taken place and continue on charter and other alternative schools, adequate funding of public education, equitable funding throughout the state, fiscal autonomy for all school districts, and non-partisan election of all school board trustees. We continue to oppose legislation of a State Superintendent of Education appointed by the Governor and the use of tax-credits for attendance at private schools. The Adult Education positions were adopted in 2007 after a 2-year study. Item #6 under GOVERNANCE is a result of consensus based on a state LWV study of school district structure and governance and was adopted at convention in 2011. Item #30 under Effective Education is the result of consensus based on a state wide LWV study of evaluation and retention of effective teachers in public schools in SC, and was adopted at the 2013 state convention. In 2015 number 2 was amended to provide for public election of the Secretary of Education. The title "Charter Schools" was amended to read "Public Charter Schools. In 2015 number 40 was amended to refer to the South Carolina Public Charter School District

NATURAL RESOURCES

“Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the

interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, habitat preservation, waste management and water resources and sustainable agricultural programs and practices.”

LWVSC supports:

1. Ensuring to the citizens of South Carolina fullest possible public participation in significant state and federal decisions relative to environmental and energy matters. This should include, but is not limited to, hearings in the state capital and in all locally affected areas.
2. Ensuring that federal facilities located in South Carolina comply with state and federal environmental laws.
3. Independent safety oversight at federal nuclear facilities.
4. Development and implementation of state solid and hazardous waste policies that protect groundwater, air quality, human health and native biota.
5. Strong and well-enforced coastal zone management laws and regulations to ensure preservation of areas of critical concern. The coastal zone should be given a greater level of legal protection.
6. SC establishing one governmental agency (or investing an existing agency) with the power to develop and implement energy policies that would give appropriate consideration to all energy-generating sources. The citizens of SC should be represented in this proposed energy policy-making agency.
7. An environmental impact process for South Carolina that would mirror the national process, promote our overarching goal as stated above and ensure the fullest possible public participation.
8. Changes in the state’s natural resource agencies and overall management that would best meet the criteria established under #1 and #4 Structure of State Government position.
9. Changes in state law to remove the mandate for the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) to carry out conflicting missions: protection of public health and the environment and promotion of economic development. Similar changes should be made in the SC Atomic Energy Act.
10. Establishment of criteria for membership on the DHEC board to ensure varied expertise, representation of South Carolina’s varied stakeholders, and freedom from conflict of interest.
11. Promoting land use and water resource policies that manage land, water and nature biota as finite resources and that incorporate principles of stewardship and other land use planning strategies at both the state and local level.
12. Requiring state officials to incorporate environmental compliance history as criterion for awarding permits.
13. We support intentional and collaborative growth management on a county and regional basis in South Carolina. We encourage regular consultations among public agencies related to

growth and development and local elected bodies—city councils, county councils, and school boards. We also encourage an open and frequent dialogue between those agencies and the general public on growth management. We support the concept of managing growth to preserve and enhance quality of life for all residents, old and new, through the effective and coordinated use of such land use management tools as conservation easements, purchase of development rights, development impact fees, and zoning where appropriate.

***Background/Action:** Delegates demonstrated a strong interest in promoting the coordination of land use objectives and resources at the 2001 convention. By the 2003 convention, the work of local Leagues in various phases of land use planning called for adding a new umbrella statement to allow continued flexibility and latitude in ongoing land and water resource issues across the state. The 2005 convention made some editorial changes to several statements. LWV on all levels has a long history of study and action in this area. In 2007-2009, LWVSC advocated for energy policies that promote conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy sources. LWVSC opposed construction of a coal-fired power plant in Florence County. A state LWV study of water issues, particularly inter-basin water conflicts, was adopted at convention 2009. This study resulted in the publication of “Quenching our State’s Thirst: A Report on the Water Resources of South Carolina.” Item #13 was the result of the adoption of concurrence with the Clemson area’s League’s study of growth management.. In 2015, Number 8 was amended to refer to #1.*

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

“Development and monitoring of governmental structures, processes, and procedures that ensure efficient, representative, responsive, transparent and accountable state and local government and citizen access to, and participation in, decision-making.”

LWVSC supports:

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

1. Subject to the Voting Rights Act, decennial reapportionments that reflect strict anti-gerrymandering standards, including:
 - a. Prompt judicial review.
 - b. Equality of population size among districts.
 - c. District lines that minimize division of established election districts (precincts, city lines, county lines).
 - d. Compact and contiguous districts.
 - e. Rejection of district lines drawn for the purpose of advantage or disadvantage to any political party, incumbent, or any other person or group.
 - f. Rejection of lines that dilute voting strength of any minority.
 - g. Rejection of the use of addresses of incumbents, political affiliation of registered voters, previous election returns, or demographic information other than population as criteria for redistricting and reapportionment.
2. Creation of a nonpartisan and independent reapportionment commission to reapportion the South Carolina House, Senate, and Congressional districts.
3. Giving rule-making authority to the State Election Commission to standardize election procedures statewide. Retain the State Election Commission as an independent non-partisan agency.
4. Combining local voter registration boards and election commissions.

5. Using the primary method of nominating for all certified state, county and national candidates with state and counties administering and bearing cost of all such primaries.
6. Moving primary date closer to date of general election.
7. Providing for proper conduct of elections through:
 - a. Instituting authority to poll watch for an issue.
 - b. Mandatory training for poll workers.
 - c. Providing adequate remuneration for poll workers.
 - d. Mandatory wearing of uniform identifying badges by all poll workers.
 - e. Mandatory uniform identification of polling places.
8. Defining precinct boundaries with a minimum and maximum number of electors in each precinct. Precinct lines should be redrawn to conform to South Carolina House and Senate district lines after each reapportionment.
9. Ensuring access to registration and voting for all citizens by:
 - a. Creating clear and accessible absentee voting and registration procedures with sufficient safeguards to prevent fraud.
 - b. Ensuring that persons imprisoned and awaiting trial, and those convicted of misdemeanors, are granted absentee registration and voting privileges.
 - c. Ensuring that voters are not denied registration for claiming the occupation "student;" students should be allowed to choose their place of residence for the purpose of registering to vote.
 - d. Providing for simplified transfer of registration within the state.
 - e. Devising simplified registration procedures.
 - f. Implementing automated systems of voting from a statewide list approved by the S.C. State Elections Commission to standardize voting procedures, lessen voter confusion, and increase the accuracy of the count, and ensuring that all provisional ballots cast by voters lacking Help America Vote Act-required ID are counted by using any of the HAVA provisos.
 - g. Improving the way ballot questions are put to voters.
 - h. Continued implementation of the National Voter Registration Act
10. Eliminating the 50%-plus-1 rule that is now required to win a primary in South Carolina. (Holding second run-offs effectively disenfranchises absentee voters as there is not enough time between elections to verify the vote, certify the candidates, and print the run-off ballot for the absentee voter. The 50%-plus-1 rule also frequently prevents access to minority candidates.)
11. Adopting election systems that ensure better proportional representation of the varied segments of our voting population, within South Carolina, by city, county or statewide, as is appropriate. Our present "winner-take-all" system in many instances fails to achieve a goal of fair representation of minorities and women. Most of the world's major democracies use a form of proportional representation, and we endorse this opportunity for the following reasons:
 - a. To achieve better election and/or influence for minorities and women in proportion to their numbers in the population.
 - b. To lessen election costs, in part by eliminating costly runoff elections.
 - c. To eliminate redistricting and its frequent abuse through gerrymandering.
 - d. To lessen the advantages now in place for incumbent candidates over new office-seekers.

- e. To lessen polarization among segments of the population.
- f. To increase voter turnout and decrease voter cynicism.
- g. To encourage election campaigns based on issues rather than personal attacks.
- h. To promote a greater opportunity for the voices of third party candidates.

Continued support for the League’s one-person, one-vote position, with added emphasis on the right of each community to develop its own election system, after careful examination of the demography of its community. Systems which may be considered include Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), Limited Voting, Cumulative Voting, and others. Of these, IRV has been used in various states and localities, and is being introduced into various election districts. It is likely to be the most effective and widely accepted new system.

The actions supported below speak to local elections only because it is unrealistic to consider them at a statewide level before actual local practice has taken hold so that the public may be aware of the advantages of a new system, as well as its simplicity in practice.

In order to seek the method most suitable for the local population, we recommend that the local League determine whether a form of proportional voting would benefit the community in so far as providing more equitable elected representation and if the result is affirmation, proceed as follows:

- i. Determine what alternative election system would be desirable to achieve the above goals.
- j. Engage in a concerted voter-education process within the community so as to gain community understanding and support.
- k. Work with the city or county council to change their respective election methods to incorporate at-large elections, as well as a selected alternative election system, either through Council vote or by voter referendum.
- l. Work with legislators to change school board election methods. (Any agreement to change the voting method will require subsequent approval of the US Justice Department.)
- m. Provide continuing voter education to enhance public acceptance and ease of voting under a new election system and work with County Election officials to ensure successful execution at the first election under a new system.

12. Protecting the integrity of the electoral process in the way elections are conducted by:

- a. Purchasing only voting machines that include a paper audit trail. Acceptable machines must ensure protection of privacy, allow the voter to verify his/her vote, and provide a reliable basis for a recount if required.
- b. Mandatory random testing of voting machines during every election.
- c. Requiring that source code of voting machines be open for inspection.

Background/Action: A study of alternative election systems was passed at the LWVSC 2003 convention. The number 11 support position was adopted by the state board at its March 2005 meeting. In 2007, with completion of a two-year study of electronic voting in SC, Section 9.f. was amended and Section 12 was added. In 2007-2009, LWVSC advocated for voting systems that enable election recounts and voter-verification of voting. LWVSC campaigned for election reform, supporting early voting centers and opposing voter photo ID. Convention 2009 adopted reapportionment and voter access as action priorities for 2009-2011. In 2015 number 2 was amended to refer to an “independent” rather than a “bipartisan” commission.

STRUCTURE OF STATE GOVERNMENT

1. Appointments by the executive and legislative branches of state government that:
 - a. Are based on qualifications for the specific appointment.
 - b. Ensure representative government by including people of different races, sexes, and ages.
 - c. Are free from financial or professional conflict of interest.
2. Appointment by the governor, subject to legislative approval, of the following government officials: Secretary of State, Treasurer, Comptroller General, Attorney General, and Commissioner of Agriculture.
3. Giving the governor the power to remove a gubernatorial board appointee for cause (which should be stated) without requiring consent of the legislature.
4. Changes that best fit the primary criteria of greater client responsiveness, combining related functions, and reducing duplication of services in any further consolidation or reorganization of state agencies and departments. Greater political accountability, cost savings, and better provision for citizen input into policy and management should also be considered.
5. The use of qualified administrative law judges, selected by the Legislature, to review agency decisions.
6. An audit process that includes the following:
 - a. An independent state agency that audits state government programs.
 - b. Retaining the Legislative Audit Council under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly.
 - c. Audit of state government programs by request of the legislature, randomly and periodically, and/or in response to special need in order to determine efficiency/cost effectiveness, compliance with state and federal statutes and regulations, how programs compare to similar programs in other states, customer/citizen satisfaction/politeness, equity (treating all citizens equally), and results.
 - d. Compliance review for audited agencies and programs by the Governor's Office since restructuring has placed more agency accountability under executive control.
7. An independent, unified judicial system with:
 - a. Merit selection of judges at all levels, including magistrates, through the establishment of a judicial nominating commission on a statewide level; and
 - b. Establishment of a judicial qualifications commission at a statewide level for the discipline and removal of judges at all levels.
8. A General Assembly that is more efficient, effective, accountable and responsive, including:
 - a. Provision for more roll call votes.
 - b. Subsistence pay for Senators only when present (as in House).
 - c. Pre-session orientation and organization for the Senate (as in House).
 - d. Restricting legislators from practicing before boards and commissions which are appointed and/or funded and/or regulated by the General Assembly.
 - e. Full disclosure of retainers by legislators.
 - f. Some limitation on the number of consecutive terms a Speaker of the House can serve. However, a Speaker should be permitted to serve at least 3 consecutive terms.
 - g. Proper staffing and financial support of state agencies mandated by law or regulations to carry out and enforce the provisions of state and federal laws and regulations.
 - h. A Committee on Committees to assign members to committees.

- i. Modification of the committee assignment procedures to include criteria other than just seniority.
 - j. Parallel jurisdiction for committees in the House and Senate.
 - k. Full publicizing of all committee meetings year round in a timely manner, giving date, time and place, including listing with the Legislative Information System.
 - l. Stronger lobbying rules to prevent former legislators from lobbying on the floor.
 - m. Prohibiting former legislators from serving as paid lobbyists in the legislature for a period of two years after they leave office.
9. Improved procedures for revising the constitution, including:
- a. Article-by-article revision as a permanent optional method to amend the Constitution.
 - b. Removal of the requirement that Constitutional amendments be returned to the General Assembly for ratification after approval by the electorate.

EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Implementation of Article VIII (Home Rule) of the SC constitution to provide for additional options for the structure, methods of election, and financing of local government bodies.
2. Annexation regulations for municipalities that:
 - a. Permit city-initiated annexation. A referendum of resident voters in the area to be annexed shall take place only if there is a petition against the annexation.
 - b. Permit unilateral city-initiated annexation in the case of enclaves.
 - c. Provide for annexation by petition of the property owners in the area proposed to be annexed or by a combination wherein residents who are registered voters are given equal standing as petitioners with property owners.
 - d. Establish procedures and criteria for annexation.
 - e. Address the disposition of the property of public service and special purpose districts in annexed areas.
 - f. Permit consolidation as an alternative to annexation.
3. No constitutional limit on local debt authorization other than that the debt be incurred in pursuit of law.
4. Changes in the structures of the school board and/or consolidating, splitting, or redrawing school district lines should be subject to a referendum by the voters in the affected school district(s).

Background/Action: *The 1999 convention authorized the board to combine positions that were formerly under Apportionment, Constitutional Revision, Election Laws & Procedures, Local Government, Restructuring of State Government and SC Legislative Structure and Procedures into a single umbrella position, which was approved at the 2000 LWVSC Council meeting. A review was conducted beginning in 2003 on the support position on initiative and referendum as a method of revising the Constitution. This was deleted as a support position at the 2005 convention. A review of the Structure of State Government section of the STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT was approved at Convention 2009. Item #4 under EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT is a result of consensus based on a state LWV study of school district structure and governance and was adopted at convention in 2011.*

State and Local Taxation

“Support for a system of state and local taxation in South Carolina that is equitable and provides adequate revenue for public purposes.”

LWVSC supports:

1. Comprehensive tax reform rather than piecemeal changes in the tax system with a view to making the system more equitable and to ensure adequate revenue. Any review of the tax system should be undertaken by a commission or other body that is broadly representative, has access to adequate support staff or technical resources, and that makes clear and ample provision for public input.
2. Shared responsibility for financing education between state and local resources so as to ensure access to quality education for all students while maintaining a significant local role in supporting and managing the public schools.
3. Provision of additional options for financing local government bodies.
4. Continued state oversight of local property tax assessment to ensure that assessment is done by qualified assessors and that reassessment is undertaken frequently enough to ensure equitable distribution of the property tax burden among property owners.
5. Reducing the regressivity of the sales tax.
6. Retaining existing property tax relief for households (homestead exemption for the elderly, school property tax relief, reduced assessment on automobiles), with any expanded relief to be directed primarily to low-income households through some kind of means testing.
7. Revising the present regulations and practices governing use-value (rather than market value) classification for farm and forest property in order to balance the desire for green space and to protect lower income households with the need to prevent abuse and excessive revenue loss.
8. Monitoring the use of property tax incentives for industry to balance the benefits, the costs, and the risks associated with these business location packages. Citizens value industrial development that brings jobs, tax revenue and other benefits. However, they are concerned that development also creates costs to existing residents and firms, service demands on local governments, pressures on infrastructure, congestion and sometimes environmental damage. County councils should continue to play a lead role in economic development in collaboration with other interested parties, including school boards, municipalities, county economic development boards and the State Department of Commerce. Future contracts should include provisions for repaying some of the benefits received if the firm does not honor its commitment in terms of capital investment and job creation.

Background/Action: *The state and local taxation position was crafted from positions under constitutional revision, education, and local government at the 1995 convention. Two successive conventions authorized a study and consensus process, which took place in 1999-2001 and 2001-03 on sales tax issues, business tax incentives, and property tax issues. The current statement was approved at the 2003 convention. The League continues to work for comprehensive tax reform with an emphasis on equity and adequacy. State and local tax policy was prioritized for action at conventions in 2007 and 2009.*

TRANSPORTATION

“Support of local, regional and coordinated multi-modal transportation services that efficiently and economically meet community needs and enhance planned growth, but do not adversely affect the environment.”

LWV Supports:

1. A balanced approach to transportation and growth management planning with emphasis on strategies that make maximum use of existing and planned roadways and provide real alternatives to the use of personal vehicles by:
 - a. Construction of conveniently located park and ride lots to facilitate car pooling and express bus service to major employment areas.
 - b. Implementation of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to encourage the use of multi-occupant travel.
 - c. More effective promotion of tax incentives to employers who encourage employees to use public transportation and/or ride share.
 - d. Use of incentives to increase the use of public transportation.
2. Consideration of pedestrians and cyclists with:
 - a. Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly development.
 - b. Provisions for pedestrians and bicycles in planning and construction of new roadways and the retrofitting of existing roadways.
3. Provision for:
 - a. Early and informed public participation in local and state transportation planning, including road construction and public transportation projects.
 - b. Public participation in evaluation processes regarding improvements/increases in services provided by local public transportation systems.
 - c. Cooperation and coordination among all state and local agencies charged with the responsibility to provide transportation services.
4. Adequate funding by:
 - a. Increasing the percentage of the state gasoline tax dedicated to funding public transportation.
 - b. Increasing city/county budgets dedicated to improved/increased public transportation services.
 - c. Amending state legislation to provide more options for public transportation providers to raise the local match for state and federal funding.

Background/Action: A study of transportation was approved at the 2001 convention. This consensus position was approved in 2003 and was further amended at Convention 2007 and 2015.

LWVSC ACTION PRIORITIES FOR 2015-2017

- Voter Access and the Election Process
- Education
- Ethics Reform
- Natural Resources
- Transportation
- Tax Reform
- Judicial Reform
- Healthcare Reform

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED IN CONVENTION 2015

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina, voting in Convention, requests that the South Carolina State Election Commission provide opportunities for interested members of the public, the academic community, public interest organizations including the League of Women Voters, and other policy makers to participate in both drafting of the RPF for voting equipment and recommending the final purchase.

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina, voting in Convention, supports the efforts of organizations focused on improving the state's literacy rate by reaching out to young children and their caregivers. We encourage the State of South Carolina to partner with proven and effective literacy programs to reach out to all of the children in our state who lack in-home resources to prepare them for success in reading.

STUDY ADOPTED IN CONVENTION 2015

One new study was adopted in support of development of state-level positions on health care. Board Healthcare specialist David Ball will chair a committee to formulate and assess study materials.

This study will focus on positions relevant to expanding health care coverage. The goal is to develop a South Carolina-specific position on expanding health care coverage of the uninsured that would energize our members and give specific language, facts and arguments to use with friends and neighbors, letters to the editor, and legislators. It will assist us in understanding how South Carolina compares to other states in coverage and health indicators, and how other states made the transition.