

League of Women Voters of New Hampshire Positions 2007-2009

GOVERNMENT

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Action to promote further constitutional reform especially in the area of taxation and the size of the General Court.

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire, after continuing study, supports changes in the New Hampshire Constitution as follows:

I. Governor

- A. The Governor should be elected for four years.
- B. The Governor should have a line item veto on budget bills.

II. In order to increase the effectiveness of the General Court:

- A. The membership of the Senate should be increased.
- B. The membership of the House should be decreased.
- C. Compensation for legislators should be established on a reasonable basis (dollar amounts should not be written into the Constitution).
- D. There should be more flexibility in the power to tax.

III. The majority required to approve constitutional amendments in a popular referendum should be less than two thirds.

In order to promote regular consideration of constitutional reforms, the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire supports the calling of a Constitutional Convention as prescribed in the Constitution.

LWVNH December 1971

Amended at Convention 1985 to delete support for Annual Sessions of the General Court (passed by popular referendum in November 1984).

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Action to achieve improved county services and to promote reform of county governmental procedures.

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire believes that regional/county government should be based on the following:

I. Structure

- A. Clear lines of authority and responsibility
 - 1. Within the region
 - 2. With other units of government (local, state, federal)
 - 3. With the public
 - 4. Without conflict of interest
- B. Taxing power (needs clarification)
- C. Accountability to citizens of the region, through an established political process
- D. Flexibility (responsiveness to change)
- E. Procedures for evaluating efficiency
- F. Well defined personnel practices

II. Functions

- A. A provider of services
 - 1. Services should meet the needs of the region and be responsive to changing needs.
 - 2. The regional government should provide only those services which it can provide most efficiently and economically.
 - 3. Minimum standards for public services should be determined for the state as a whole, and observance of these standards should be enforced at all levels of government.

- B. A planning agency
 - 1. Comprehensive planning
 - a. Overall goals and need priorities for the region should be established.
 - b. Various functional activities should be related to each other and to overall comprehensive planning.
 - 2. Local government activities should be reviewed and coordinated with regional activities to avoid duplication.
 - 3. Specific planning activities in such areas as air pollution control, solid waste management, transportation, law enforcement, water quality, land use, manpower and economic development, etc., should be carried out by the regional government.
 - 4. Technical assistance and joint services should be offered to local governments to provide economies of scale when carried out on a regional basis (cooperative purchasing, regional jails and correction centers, area-wide solid waste disposal facilities, etc.).

Recommendations for Reform of County Government

Improvement in services and reform of procedures are necessary to make county government more effective. Areas in special need of improvement and reform are: Corrections and Welfare Services; Personnel, Budgetary, Accountability procedures.

Overlapping or duplication of functions should be eliminated within the county

County operations should be coordinated and integrated with state and local operations in all areas.

County operations come under the Right-to-Know Law (RSA 91-A). County officials should make a positive effort to keep the public informed.

LWVNH, May 1973

REGIONAL ORGANIZATION/REGIONAL PLANNING

Action to achieve increased effectiveness for Regional Planning Commissions

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire supports the following positions with regard to Regional Organizations/Regional Planning:

- I. **Structure**
 - A. Boundaries should be reviewed periodically to ensure common geographic and economic characteristics.
 - B. Mandatory membership for local governmental units should be a long-range goal.
 - C. Regional planning commissioners should be appointed who have the interest and the time to fulfill the responsibilities of their job. By-laws should be established by commissions regulating duties (including attendance).
- II. **Projects**
 - A. Physical, economic and environmental problems are suitable topics for regional planning.
 - B. Planning for human and social needs should be carried out primarily by appropriate social agencies, coordinated with planning under (A) where indicate
 - C. Project priorities should be based on the comprehensive plan for the region.
 - D. Projects should be carried out by commission staff (utilizing consultants, citizen committees where appropriate).
 - E. Projects should be evaluated in relation to the comprehensive goals of the region and the specific goals of the project.
 - F. Project accountability should be to providers of funds and to the public.
- III. **Funding/Accountability**

- A. Basic funding should be through membership dues from local governments and through contracted services.
- B. Additional funding should be provided for projects from state and federal sources.
- C. Initial accountability should be to local governments, then to the state planning office and to the federal government (to the county only if contracted services are involved).

IV. Interrelationships

- A. The State Planning Office should play a non-coercive role:
 - 1. As clearinghouse, coordinating agency;
 - 2. To develop statewide policy guidelines and minimum standards.
- B. Relationships between regions should be improved by better communications and by cooperation on projects as needs demand.
- C. Regional Planning Commissions should improve public relations efforts and actively encourage citizen participation.
- D. Commissioners should take an active part in explaining Commission projects and activities, and in enlisting citizen and community support.

Regional planning commissions should continue their advisory status. They should not become part of the state or county governmental structure, nor should they become a separate (fourth) level of government within the state responsible only to local governments.

LWVNH, April 1976

FINANCING GOVERNMENT

Action in support of reforms to achieve equity in the New Hampshire tax system. Support of increased state funding for elementary and secondary education to provide equal access to basic educational opportunities for every student.

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire has established the following criteria for evaluating state taxes:

The optimum tax is one that provides a reliable source of revenue, raises adequate revenue to justify its imposition, is based on ability to pay, and is levied on a broad segment of the population.

The League also supports, where appropriate, a tax that is a direct payment for a service or benefit (“user’s tax”).

The League finds the following characteristics desirable in judging taxes: -

- Progressiveness
- Low cost of administration
- Directness
- Ease of collection
- Flexibility (to meet changing economic conditions)

The League would support a tax that regulates or sets policy only if adequate safeguards are incorporated, such as a periodic review process.

In examining New Hampshire’s present tax structure, the League finds that most state taxes only partially satisfy the above criteria. The League supports tax reforms that would make the present system more equitable and provide a broader base.

- 1. The League recommends the development of long-range fiscal goals to guide the state’s budgetary process.

The League recognizes that New Hampshire’s governmental structure (two-year term for governor and biennial budgets), as well as the present tax system, tend to inhibit rather than promote long-range fiscal planning.

Opportunity should be provided for effective participation in this process by a broad spectrum of public and private interest groups, as well as individual citizens.

2. The League believes that when the legislature promulgates laws requiring expenditures, these laws should be funded to the greatest extent possible from state revenues.

Responsibility for funding such laws lies with the legislature and should not be passed on to other governmental units without a good-faith effort to provide state funding.

3. The League believes that, if additional revenue is needed to support state government, any new taxes should meet the criteria established above. The League would support, in order of priority:

- a tax based on ability to pay,
- a user's tax and
- an increase in existing taxes.

The League finds that flat-rate and earmarked taxes are the least desirable means of raising revenue.

4. The League supports increased state funding for elementary and secondary education and the maintenance of local control over school budgets.

- The state should continue assistance to school districts to meet state minimum standards.
- State-mandated programs should be funded by the state.
- Foundation Aid should be fully funded.

5. The League believes that every student in New Hampshire should have access to equal basic educational opportunities.

The state should continue to set minimum standards and guidelines.

State funds should be used to reduce the basic educational inequalities among school districts. The League supports full funding of Foundation Aid as the first step in achieving this goal.

6. The League believes that state support for elementary and secondary education should be a high priority in the state budget.

LWVNH, December 9, 1980

AN INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

Support of a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation in the state legislature and in the U.S. House of Representatives with maximum opportunity for public scrutiny.

Support of legislation establishing an independent, non-partisan commission with broad-based community representation as the preferred redistricting body.

EXPANSION

1. The standards on which a re-districting plan is based, regardless of who has responsibility for redistricting:

- a. should include as required by federal and state law
 - 1) substantially equal population
 - 2) geographic contiguity
 - 3) protection from diluting the voting strength of a racial or linguistic minority
 - 4) preservation of town or ward boundaries
- b. should prohibit the consideration of
 - 1) the political affiliations of registered voters
 - 2) the previous election results

2. The redistricting process, regardless of who has responsibility for redistricting, should include:
 - a. time limits for the process
 - 1) automatic non-judicial procedures for problems of process and timely completion of the redistricting
 - 2) automatic court action if a plan is not completed on time (the plan, including appeals, must be in place 30 days before the deadline for candidates declaration to run for office.)
 - b. maximum opportunity for public scrutiny, including
 - 1) public hearings in a variety of locations around the state during the process (One suggestion was to hold at least three meetings in each congressional district.)
 - 2) information concerning redistricting during the process should also be widely disseminated to the public by means of all available media.
 - 3) Wide dissemination of the final plan, both in print (at municipal offices and libraries) and in electronic form with notices concerning availability in all media
 - 4) An appeal process

3. Re-districting should be limited to every ten years only (following the census).

Adopted by LWVNH state board, 2005

NATURAL RESOURCES

ENERGY

Action to achieve a reduction in New Hampshire's use of energy

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire believes that New Hampshire cannot and should not sustain its historical growth rate of energy consumption. In both the state and national interest, New Hampshire must make a significant reduction in its use of energy.

- I. Specifically, New Hampshire should reduce its overall consumption of oil and gas, and should develop and use a mix of energy sources based on the following policies:
 - A. Top priority should be given to conservation.
 - B. Increased utilization of renewable resources: solar, hydro, wood, wind, and solid waste.
 - C. The environmentally sound use of coal.
 - D. There should be no increase in the present use of nuclear power.

- II. New Hampshire should commit itself to a policy of energy efficiency. The League believes that immediate state action is needed in the following areas:
 - A. Mandatory standards for energy conservation.
 - B. A statewide code to include strict thermal and lighting standards.
 - C. Time-of-day utility pricing and revision of the utility rate structure to reflect actual production cost.
 - D. New regulations to facilitate licensing procedures for industrial or home produced power.
 - E. Requirement that public utilities accept industrial or home-produced electricity at an equitable price.
 - F. Promotion of more public transportation.
 - G. Mandatory deposits on soft drink and malt beverage containers.

- III. In order to implement these goals, the League recommends:
 - A. That the Governor's Energy Office should assume a leadership role in policymaking, public education, research and development, and in all other matters pertaining to the state's energy program.

- B. That the conservation of energy and the development of renewable energy sources should be encouraged by appropriate tax measures (incentives and fines).
- C. That assessment of the state's energy needs should be based on objective current information.
- D. That the Public Utilities Commission should be reorganized to provide adequate protection for consumer interests as well as for utilities' welfare. Public hearings at all levels should be an integral part of the decision-making process.
- E. That all state agencies should reflect the state's energy policy goals in their planning and regulatory operations.
- F. That environmental, health and safety standards and compliance tables should not be relaxed in pursuit of the state's energy goals.

The processes used to develop and implement state energy strategies should give a voice to all levels of government.

Public understanding and cooperation are essential to the success of any state energy strategy. Citizen participation in decision-making must be assured at every governmental level.

LWVNH, April 1978

LAND USE

Action to achieve wise use of land; to provide an optimum balance between human, social and economic needs and environmental quality; and to conserve and ensure wise use of energy and other natural resources.

The League believes that state government has an obligation to:

1. Develop processes for comprehensive land use planning, including development of growth policy;
2. Encourage local, state and regional capabilities for land use planning and regulation;
3. Insure adequate public access to recreational areas;
4. Promote new concepts of community design.

Land Use Decisions of More than Local Concern

The League has identified the following areas as being of more than local concern and advocates an enhanced state role in regulating land use in these areas:

1. Uncontrolled areas/unincorporated areas;
2. Fragile or historic lands where development could result in irreversible damage;
3. Renewable resource lands, where development could result in loss of productivity,
4. Natural hazard lands, where development could endanger life and property;
5. Areas impacted by public investment, where siting results in secondary land use demands;
6. Large scale private development, which would have substantial impact upon the physical, social and economic development of the area.

At a minimum, the state's role should include the following:

1. The state should require impact statements on major public and private development.
2. The state should develop criteria against which to review land use decisions in these areas.
3. The state should support the development of regional planning and decision-making capabilities, to be applied to large land use projects with regional impact.

Local Land Use Decisions

The League believes that most land use decisions are best made on the town or city level. The state's role should be a coordinating rather than a coercive one, as follows:

1. The state should develop a comprehensive land use plan for New Hampshire, designed to enhance local decision-making and coordinated with plans and policies of regional agencies.

2. The state should provide increased financial and technical assistance for research, data collection and planning.
3. The state should encourage local communities to use innovative land use planning and regulatory techniques.
4. The state should establish an appeals procedure to arbitrate conflicts between governmental bodies and between citizens and governmental bodies in land use decisions.
5. The state should develop mechanisms to minimize conflict of interest on the part of persons who make land use decisions.
6. The state should develop and implement techniques to assure meaningful participation by citizens throughout the process of land use decisions, whether local, regional or statewide.

LWVNH, February 1975

SITING SPECIAL FACILITIES

Action to develop and implement effective siting and operating procedures for special facilities which will safeguard environmental quality, include public participation, and provide for conflict resolution.

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire finds that, in order to minimize conflict in major facility siting decisions, the state must assume a leadership role in the process.

I. Siting a Facility

- A.. The state should develop a comprehensive siting process which will insure public participation at every level in each stage of the process. In developing the siting process, the state must give priority to protecting the environment and the public health and safety.
- B. Local master plans should include provisions dealing with special facility siting.

The local community will negotiate as an equal partner with the state and the developer. The state has the further responsibility of providing technical and financial assistance to the community.

If conflicts arise, the League recommends use of the mediation process at an early stage.

II. Regulating and Monitoring a Facility

- A. . Role of the state
 1. Effective monitoring of the special facility during operation and after closure.
 2. Assurance of adequate liability coverage (including emergency situations).
- B. Role of the host community
 1. Active participation in the monitoring process.
 2. Right to recourse via administrative or judicial procedures.

LWVNH, May 14, 1985

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Concurrence statement on disposal of low level radioactive - Tri-State

The Leagues of Women Voters of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont adopt the following position on Low Level Radioactive Waste Disposal:

COMPACT STATUS

The Leagues of Women Voters of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont believe there are a number of acceptable solutions for the three states to meet their responsibility under the Federal Low Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act of 1980 with regard to disposal of low level waste generated within the region. The Leagues support:

1. A regional compact which meets League criteria.
2. Development of a single in-state site for disposal of waste produced in each state providing the legal questions of federal preemption and application of interstate commerce laws are resolved, if no satisfactory regional compact can be developed.

DISPOSAL METHODS

The Leagues support disposition of nuclear wastes in an environmentally sound manner. The host state must be responsible for monitoring and ensuring isolation of the waste for the duration of its radioactive life. Because the region has complex geologic, climatic, hydrogeologic, and seismic conditions, the Leagues support storage and disposal methods that provide for monitoring, separation, and retrievability in engineered facilities using best available technology.

SITE SELECTION

The Leagues want hazardous and radioactive waste treatment, storage and disposal facilities sited under conditions which pose the least amount of risk to the public and to sensitive environmental areas and natural resources. They must be located away from natural hazard areas, drinking water supplies, fragile land areas, valuable ecosystems, significant renewable resources, wildlife, historic and agricultural areas. Secondary land use impacts, such as buffer areas, adequate roads, and transportation safety, must also be considered.

MANAGEMENT

The Leagues endorse host state control during all stages of managing low level radioactive waste. The host state should oversee site selection, active operations, the decommissioning, closure, and institutional control of the site. This must include long-term monitoring and maintenance to ensure that wastes remain isolated until they are environmentally safe. The host state needs enforcement capability and the ability to sue violators for damages.

ECONOMICS

A complete evaluation of the economic, social, and environmental impacts must 'be carried out in such a way that decision-makers and the public have adequate information on which to base a decision. The full costs of planning, selecting, building, administering, operating, monitoring, providing liability coverage, and institutional control after closure must be adequately projected and borne by the generators of waste. Provision should be made for periodic review of the economics of the operation.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The League of Women Voters strongly believes that public understanding is crucial to the success of important decisions on low level waste disposal. The League proposes clear provisions for public participation and strict application of the Right-to-Know Law. Citizen participation throughout the decision-making process must be assured at every governmental level.

Statement developed July 5, 1984 by Carol Fritz (LWVME), Aileen Katz (LWVNH), Sonja Schuyler (LWVVT).

Criteria for evaluating low level radioactive waste COMPACT PROPOSALS in the eleven states of the Northeast

These criteria were developed in April 1984 by a working group of League leaders in the Northeast states to help evaluate low level radioactive waste compacts that may be proposed as substitutes for the Northeast LLW compact.

The League of Women Voters supports cooperative solutions to the national problem of low level waste management and disposal through the adoption of regional compacts. LWV believes state cooperation offers a safe, effective and economic means to achieve an important goal—the environmentally sound management and disposal of low level waste. The establishment of regional compacts provides an effective means to ensure protection of public health and the environment and is preferred over the proliferation of disposal treatment and storage facilities.

Compact language should include these provisions:

- 1) Guidelines and timetables to aggressively encourage source and volume reduction;
- 2) Accountability of a compact commission and ample and effective opportunities for public participation in decision making:
 - a) *Public funds for such participation;
 - b) *Provision for effective participation by the host community (communities) in the entire process;
 - c) *Provision for periodic review of site operation;
- 3) Full judicial review including judicial review standards;
- 4) A liability system that is equitable and that ensures sufficient funds will be available for clean-up or compensation, should this be necessary at any time during operation and after closure;
- 5) An equitable and timely host state selection process that emphasizes environmentally sound siting processes and ensures proportional sharing of responsibility;
- 6) Equitable sharing of responsibility for regulation, financing and siting;
- 7) *Clear lines of responsibility for producers, party states, host state, and compact commission;
- 8) **Requirement for periodic internal review and evaluation by party states, with clear guidelines for procedures on amending the compact if necessary;
- 9) *The full costs of planning, selecting, building, administering, operating, monitoring, providing liability coverage and institutional control after closure must be adequately projected and borne by the generators of the waste.

*Added by LWVs of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont.

** Added by LWVs of Maine and New Hampshire.

Approved in full by LWVNH state board, September 11, 1984

SOCIAL POLICY

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Action to achieve an effective, integrated and coordinated system of juvenile justice in New Hampshire.

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire believes that constitutional rights and fair hearings must be assured to all individuals. To this end, the disposition of youth adjudicated delinquent or CHINS (Children in Need of Services) must be designed to treat and rehabilitate offenders in the least restrictive environment, promoting family unity and community responsibility whenever possible.

Recognizing that the need for youth services in various communities throughout our state can differ substantially, and that the ability of communities to fund and promote programs independent of outside help is also variable, the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire advocates that the state take a greater role in the administration of services to delinquent and pre-delinquent youth. Such a role would include:

1. State aid in custodial care of delinquents and CHINS.
2. Allocation of state funds to help achieve legislative mandates.
3. Statewide guidelines for training of persons involved with the administration of juvenile justice.
4. State requirements for uniform statistical record keeping.

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire firmly believes that the primary responsibility for good care and treatment of juvenile offenders lies with local governments. Whenever necessary, however, the state should provide assistance to maximize local effectiveness. Some areas of importance are:

1. Urgent need throughout the state for temporary custodial care of youth in state of crisis—i.e., “crisis houses”

2. Incentives to communities and employers to create work experience and/or apprenticeship programs.
3. Statewide coordination of services for juvenile offenders.

At the local level, the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire supports measures to increase the effectiveness of the communication between school guidance departments, police, parents, and service providers. In addition, the League supports alternative education programs and youth employment initiatives.

LWVNH March 10, 1981.

GAMBLING

The LWVNH board voted concurrence with the LWV of Pennsylvania position on gambling after reading and discussion of a thorough synopsis of the Pennsylvania document. The League's position is to oppose further expansion of gambling in New Hampshire.

In 1984 the LWV of Pennsylvania completed its exhaustive study of gambling, a copy of which they kindly shared with our LWVNH in Jan. 2000 when requested. A copy is in the LWVNH office files at 4 Park St., Concord. It is 47 pages plus bibliography and charts. The synopsis on which discussion was based is also in the files.

According to LWVUS protocol, state leagues may concur with positions taken by other state leagues, based on reading and discussion of the position.

Methodology: Consensus was reached in LWVPA by 40 local leagues prior to May 1984. Study kits were supplied to the local leagues. A total of 11 consensus questions were included. The state committee that reviewed the consensus question results decided that agreement by 24 or more local leagues (60%) constituted consensus. In addition, a number of expert sources were consulted. While the books and periodicals used are now at least 15 years old, and certainly details such as median income of families and revenues generated are laughably low, the consensus points reached are broad and general enough to still seem sound. It covers those questions most applicable to our current situation: proposed expansion of gambling in the forms of casino gambling, slot machines, and off-track betting.

LWVNH November 2001

As the gambling status quo is described in PA (circa 1985), it seems to match the situation in NH: that is, games of chance for fund-raising such as Bingo exist and seem not to offend the population. PA had a state lottery and betting at racetracks, as NH does in 2001.

CONSENSUS REACHED in PA

- Opposed to legalization of additional forms of gambling with the exception of small games of chance.
- No position on legislation regarding small games of chance for nonprofit fundraising.
- Lack of clear consensus for allowing casinos statewide and in big cities if legalized. Also lack of consensus for confining these activities to resort hotels and resort areas only if legalized.
- Clear consensus for limiting size and density of video game, slot machine, and casino operations, requiring adequate existing municipal services, environmental impact statements, and siting restrictions for off-track and sports betting operations.
- Consensus to favor local option to permit gambling by voter referendum, as well as consensus to have state regulation of all forms of gambling with local option to set stricter rules.
- Consensus in favor of levying special taxes on private-for-profit gambling operations.
- No consensus in favor of earmarking gambling revenues.
- Consensus favoring state support of a compulsive gambling [treatment] program.