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Because of a request made in 2016, the League clarified part of its position on immigration "to mean that simple illegal re-entry is not considered a 'serious crime' for League advocacy purposes."

In the 115th Congress (2017 - 2019), the League opposed the rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy by the Trump administration. In response, the League again advocated for passage of a clean *DREAM Act* in Congress. The LWVUS Lobby Corps lobbied both the House and the Senate on this issue.

The League also opposed the *Securing America's Future Act of 2018*, which would have put immigrant youth at risk of deportation while supporting actions at our borders to separate children from their families and funding a wall at our southern border. During the 2018 Convention in Chicago, League members marched in support of immigrants and families while protesting this and other pieces of related legislation.

The League also opposed the Trump administration's Public Charge Rule, which directed immigration officials to limit the entrance of immigrants who they deemed would become more dependent on government funding to meet their basic human needs.

In early 2019, LWV joined a coalition of 44 organizations to file an amicus in *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California, et al.*, a trio of cases involving whether the US Department of Homeland Security's decision to end DACA without a pathway for DACA-eligible individuals to remain in the country legally was legal. The US Supreme Court ruled in June 2020 that DHS's decision to end the program did not properly follow the *Administrative Procedure Act* and the majority court held that the agency failed to provide relevant factors associated with ending the program, making the agency's actions arbitrary and capricious. LWV issued a statement commending the court on the ruling and encouraged Congress to pass comprehensive reform legislation on immigration that includes a pathway to citizenship. At the start of the 116th Congress, the League supported passage of the bipartisan *DREAM Act of 2021*. At the same time, the organization supported *The New Deal for New Americans Act*, which would expand access to citizenship, fund workforce development and English-language learning programs, and increase the number of refugees the United States resettles, while rebuilding the capacity and infrastructure of local communities to welcome refugees.

In early 2021, the League joined immigrant rights advocates in successfully urging senators to oppose amendments denying economic impact payments to mixed-immigration-status families. The League also asked the Biden administration to uphold basic due process and human rights for Haitians seeking asylum at the US border. At the same time, the League asked the administration to provide Temporary Protected Status or Deferred Enforced Departure for Cameroonians living in the US. The League urged the administration to designate Mexico for Temporary Protected Status.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Meeting Basic Human Needs, as revised by the national board, January 1989, based on positions reached from 1971 through 1988:



The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that one of the goals of social policy in the United States should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most-effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty.

Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and access to health care.

The federal government should set minimum, uniform standards and guidelines for social welfare programs and should bear primary responsibility for financing programs designed to help meet the basic needs of individuals and families. State and local governments, as well as the private sector, should have a secondary role in financing food, housing, and health care programs. Income assistance programs should be financed primarily by the federal government with state governments assuming secondary responsibility.

Preventing and Reducing Poverty

In order to prevent or reduce poverty, LWVUS supports policies and programs designed to increase job opportunities; increase access to health insurance; provide support services such as child care and transportation; provide opportunities and/or incentives for basic or remedial education and job training; decrease teen pregnancy; and ensure that noncustodial parents contribute to the support of their children.

Access to Health Care

LWVUS believes that access to health care includes the following: preventive care, primary care, maternal and child health care, emergency care, catastrophic care, nursing home care, and mental health care, as well as access to substance abuse programs, health and sex education programs, and nutrition programs.

Access to Transportation

LWVUS believes that energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and will continue to examine transportation policies in light of these goals.

Further Guidelines and Criteria

Criteria for Income Assistance

- Eligibility of all low-income individuals for assistance should be based on need. Eligibility should be established through simplified procedures such as a declaration of need, spot-checked in a manner similar to that used in checking the validity of income tax returns.
- Benefit levels should be sufficient enough to provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing, and shelter. Minimum income standards should be adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living and should be revised periodically to take into account changes in the purchasing value of the dollar. Until a federal welfare program achieves an adequate level of benefits, some states will need to supplement federal payments.
- There should be increasing emphasis on cash assistance, but in-kind assistance (e.g., food stamps, housing subsidies, medical aid) should be continued to help assure that these needs are met.
- Under a revised program, participants should not have their benefits reduced.
- Privacy of participants should be protected. All administrative procedures should be conducted with respect for the rights and dignity of the individuals.



- Work should be encouraged: participants' total income should increase as earnings increase. Counseling, realistic training for actual jobs, and financial incentives should be the links between job programs and income assistance.

Criteria for Supportive Services

- Supportive services should be available — but not compulsory — for participants in income assistance programs. Most important among these are child care, counseling, transportation, family planning, health care, and legal services.
- Fees for supportive services should be based on ability to pay and be free where necessary.
- Facilities and services for participants should be the same as for the general public.
- The federal government should exert leadership in setting standards for eligibility, the quality of services, and adequate funding.
- Participants in the programs should be included in program development and implementation, and the administration of social services programs should be responsive to the needs of the people being served.
- Wherever possible, these services should be conveniently located in the neighborhood.
- Transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and should also provide energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation.
- Government programs that require recipients of assistance to engage in work-related programs would be acceptable only if the following protections are guaranteed to the participants:
 - Job training.
 - Basic education.
 - Exemptions for primary care givers.
 - Supplemental support services such as child care and transportation.
 - Equitable compensation to ensure that program participants earn the same wages and benefits as other employees performing similar work.
 - A disregard of some earned income for purposes of calculating benefit levels.

Criteria for Housing Supply

- The following considerations can be applied to programs and policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family:
- The responsibility for achieving national housing goals rests primarily with the federal government, which should:
 - Assure that our economic system is functioning to produce and maintain sufficient decent housing for citizens at all income levels.
 - Compensate for any failure or inadequacy of the system by building, financing, renting, and selling homes to those citizens whose housing needs are not being met.
 - Give a variety of incentives to local jurisdictions to encourage them to provide within their boundaries an adequate supply of decent housing for low- and moderate-income groups.
 - Withhold federal funds from communities that fail to encourage such housing.
- State and local governments should assist by establishing effective agencies to aid, promote, coordinate, and supplement the housing programs of the federal government and the private sector.
- Government at all levels must make available sufficient funds for housing-assistance programs.
- When families or individuals cannot afford decent housing, government should provide assistance in the form of income and/or subsidized housing.

- Government programs providing subsidies to the building, financing, and insuring industries for housing for lower income families should be evaluated in terms of units produced rather than in terms of benefits accruing to these industries.
- Government at all levels should develop policies that will assure sufficient land at reasonable cost on which to develop housing and that will assure fulfillment of other goals such as access to employment, preservation of open space, environmental cleanliness and beauty, and other aspects of a suitable living environment.
- Regional and metropolitan planning should be promoted to prevent haphazard urban growth, and housing for low and moderate income families should be provided as a part of all planned neighborhoods or communities.
- Lower income families should not be segregated in large developments or neighborhoods. As their economic status improves, lower income families should be enabled to continue to live in the same units as private tenants or as homeowners, if they are so inclined.
- Housing should be designed to meet human needs and should be built with amenities that will encourage economic integration within apartment buildings as well as within neighborhoods.
- Publicly assisted housing should be included in viable, balanced communities, with provision for quality public services and facilities (e.g., schools, transportation, recreation) that will encourage integration and stability.
- Zoning practices and procedures that will counteract racial and economic isolation should be promoted.
- State and local governments should adopt and enforce:
 - Uniform building codes with standards based on performance.
 - Housing codes to protect the health and safety of all citizens.
- State and local tax structures should be examined and revised to:
 - Benefit communities that build housing for lower-income families.
 - Encourage private owners to improve their homes.
 - Reduce speculative land costs.
- Government, industry, and labor should encourage innovative building techniques to reduce the cost of housing production.
- Rights of tenants to negotiate for proper maintenance, management of facilities, and services should be protected.
- Housing programs should be administered by individuals trained for the jobs and sympathetic with the needs of their clientele.
- Citizen groups should participate in the development of publicly assisted housing programs by:
 - Evaluating performance.
 - Activating nonprofit sponsorships.
 - Supporting legislation.
 - Developing public awareness of housing discrimination and need.

League History

After adopting the Meeting Basic Human Needs position in 1988, the League reorganized the Social Policy program in 1990. This reorganization combined several existing positions to address the basic needs of all people for food, shelter, and access to health care and transportation. The Meeting Basic Human Needs position encompasses previous positions on income assistance and transportation. The issue of housing supply was separated from the fair housing position, still under Equality of Opportunity, and put under the Meeting Basic Human Needs position.



In 2015, the LWWUS Board voted to interpret the Meeting Basic Human Needs Position to include support for a living wage. After considerable program debate at the 2014 LWWUS convention, the Advocacy Committee took up the issue and agreed to call attention of Leagues to the Meeting Basic Human Needs position to suggest that the position can be used in communities in “working toward an income that meets basic human needs.” Additionally, the Committee agreed that specific issues in relation to a living wage and income levels should be decided by Leagues working in their communities.

Income Assistance

The 1970 Convention adopted a study of alternatives to welfare. As a result of the study, members agreed to support a system of federalized income assistance. The position, adopted in 1971, suggests criteria for such a system and for minimum uniform standards of eligibility for both cash benefits and supportive services (in-kind benefits). The position is closely linked with the Employment position in encouraging work and in emphasizing the responsibility of the federal government to help those who can't find work, those whose earnings are insufficient to meet basic needs, and those who are unable to work.

Adoption of the position coincided with a congressional effort to make major changes in the welfare system in 1971 - 72. The League mounted an all-out lobbying effort, despite recognized shortcomings in the legislation. In the late 1970s, the League attempted unsuccessfully to strengthen a number of federal welfare reform proposals. The League has supported a variety of specific programs for income assistance and in-kind benefits – food stamps, low-income energy assistance, child-care legislation, reform of unemployment compensation and Aid to Families with Dependent Children programs, and housing subsidies. Comprehensive child care remains an elusive but critically needed support service for women seeking employment. In each case, the League has pressed for uniform minimum federal standards of eligibility, uniform standards for benefits based on need, and standards for quality of services.

The League has opposed cutoffs of Medicaid funding for abortion, on the basis of the supportive services provisions of the Income Assistance position and because such actions clearly discriminate against economically disadvantaged women and people who can become pregnant.

In the 1980s, national League action on income assistance focused primarily on opposition to funding cutbacks, dilution of the federal role, and changes in eligibility requirements for income maintenance programs and support services.

In 1986 - 88, the League worked in support of welfare reform legislation in Congress, culminating in passage of the *Family Support Act of 1988*. The League had supported the House version, the *Family Welfare Reform Act*, which included provisions for education, training, and employment of welfare recipients. The final bill followed the Senate version, which the League joined the national Coalition on Human Needs to oppose, citing inadequate funding and mandatory participation quotas. Since passage of the Act, states continue to face implementation decisions.

The League lobbied successfully in support of the *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*, designed to guarantee workers unpaid leave for illness or the birth or adoption of a child. Through the years, the League has supported the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as a necessary form of income assistance.



Other League efforts include lobbying the 102nd Congress (1991 – 1993) to pass the *Mickey Leland Hunger Relief Act* and the *Freedom from Want Act*, both designed to alleviate hunger in the United States. In 1988 – 90, LWVEF coordinated an 18-month Hunger Advocacy Project designed to help state and local Leagues develop and carry out model, targeted activities to document or alleviate hunger. A guide, *Fighting Hunger in Your Community*, provided information on replicating such activities.

In 1989 – 90, LWVEF promoted discussion of a Ford Foundation report on social welfare, *The Common Good*. Local Leagues held three regional workshops on issues raised in the report and conducted related community education activities.

The League actively opposed welfare reform legislation proposed in the 104th Congress (1995 – 1997). During summer 1996, the White House and Congress agreed on legislation to essentially hand over welfare to the states. Despite the League's strong lobbying effort with a particular focus on the President, the bill was passed and signed into law in August 1996. State Leagues across the country monitored the implementation and effects of reform efforts at the state level to ensure that the benefits were provided where needed and that recipients' civil rights were protected.

In fall 2005, the League responded to the Hurricane Katrina disaster, urging Congress to protect basic human needs of those affected by securing essentials – jobs, income when work is not available, health care, food, education, child care, and housing – while also protecting and expanding the capacity of the federal government to respond by preserving and increasing funding for vital services and not sapping revenues through misdirected tax cuts.

As the 113th Congress (2013 – 2015) cut funding and changed eligibility formulas for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), (formerly the Food Stamp program), the League joined with other organizations to urge Congress to strengthen the program, not weaken it.

Housing Supply

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the League worked for a number of federal housing reforms. In 1974, League support was channeled into aspects of the *Housing and Community Development Act*, which consolidated federal assistance under a block grant approach. The League fought against congressional action to weaken the Community Development Block Grant program through drastic cuts in the full range of authorized low- and moderate-income subsidies for both rehabilitation and new housing.

Throughout the 1980s, the League continued to support increased funding to add to and maintain the existing stock of federally assisted housing people with very low incomes. LWVUS efforts included working as a member of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition to urge passage of 1987 legislation authorizing the Department of Housing and Urban Development's low-income housing and community development programs, as well as endorsing the 1989 Housing Now march on Washington.

As a member of the Low-Income Housing Coalition's Women and Housing Task Force, LWVUS endorsed recommendations predicated on the conviction that every person and family should have decent, safe, affordable housing. State and local Leagues have worked to increase the supply of housing for people with low and moderate incomes through efforts to change zoning laws and set up shared housing services.



In 2002, LWVUS formally endorsed legislation to establish the National Housing Trust Fund, using surplus funds from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to create new housing for families with low incomes.

Transportation

LWVUS concern about public transportation grew out of efforts on behalf of equal opportunity for employment and housing. The 1971 Air Quality position added another dimension to this concern by urging “measures to reduce vehicular pollution . . . and development of alternate transportation systems.” In 1972, the LWVUS Board responded to questions of interpretation by synthesizing the two positions into a unified Transportation position. In 1976, following League concurrence on the Energy Conservation position, the LWVUS Board reaffirmed the national League’s Transportation position. In 1979, the Urban Policy position reinforced the theme that federal aid for highway construction should be reduced; the Transportation position language was revised to make that point clear.

The League first put the position to work by backing a national coalition’s efforts to amend the *Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972* to permit financing part of the costs of urban mass transit from highway trust funds. The League also supported the *National Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974*. Later the focus shifted to prevent stalling or cutting of federal assistance to mass transit systems.

In response to the urgency to improve and promote public transportation systems, the 1980 Convention voted to give greater emphasis to the Transportation position. In 1988, it was incorporated into the Meeting Basic Human Needs position. Leagues continue to use the Transportation position with their own local or Inter-League Organization (ILO) positions to back local and regional moves to improve mass transit and support other alternatives, such as express lanes for buses and carpools.

Child Care

The League’s Position

Statement of Position on Child Care, as adopted by the 1988 Convention, based on positions reached from 1969 through 1988:

LWVUS supports programs, services, and policies at all levels of government to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it, in order to increase access to employment and to prevent and reduce poverty.

League History

The League has long recognized that child care programs are a key supportive service for families in need.

The 1988 LWVUS Convention adopted child care as a priority and separated the child care position within the Social Policy position. The League supported a compromise child care bill, signed by the President in 1990, which provided financial assistance to low incomes for child care; increased the availability of child care through resource and referral programs and training for child-care workers; and required states to establish health and safety

