

# Public Participation

## The League's Position

*Statement of Position on Public Participation as announced 1986 – 88:*

**The League believes that public understanding and cooperation are essential to the responsible and responsive management of our nation's natural resources. The public has a right to know about pollution levels, dangers to health and the environment, and proposed resource management policies and options. The public has a right to participate in decision-making at each phase in the process and at each level of government involvement.**

**Officials should make a special effort to develop readily understandable procedures for public involvement and to ensure that the public has adequate information to participate effectively. Public records should be readily accessible at all governmental levels. Adequate funding is needed to ensure opportunities for public education and effective public participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.**

**The appropriate level of government should publicize, in an extensive and timely manner and in readily available sources, information about pollution levels, pollution-abatement programs, and resource management policies and options. Hearings should be held in easily accessible locations, at convenient times and, when possible, in the area concerned. The hearing procedures and other opportunities for public comment should actively encourage citizen participation in decision-making.**

**The League supports public education that provides a basic understanding of the environment and the social, economic, and environmental costs and benefits of environmental protection, pollution control, and conservation.**

**Mechanisms for citizen appeal must be guaranteed, including access to the courts. Due process rights for the affected public and private parties must be assured.**

## **League History**

While fighting for a broad range of environmental legislation, the League has stressed citizen participation as a necessary component of decision-making at all levels of government.

In pressing for full implementation of the *Clean Air Act of 1970*, the League fought for greater citizen access to state plans for achieving national ambient air-quality standards. League efforts to educate and involve the public in waste management issues at the state and local levels have included support for mandatory beverage container deposit legislation, known as “bottle bills,” to promote recycling and reuse. In supporting the *Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982*, Leagues pushed for adequate state consultation and concurrence in nuclear-waste repository siting decisions. In statements to the nuclear regulatory community, state Leagues emphasized the need for citizen participation in nuclear power decisions.

League efforts to promote household-hazardous-waste collection across the country, to ensure safe drinking water for all, and to protect groundwater also are part of a continuing focus on heightening citizen awareness and participation in decision making.

Passage of the *Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986* (SARA Title III) gave Leagues a new tool to combat pollution. This act gives communities access to information from chemical facilities on releases and spills, allows “regulation by information,” and encourages the development of emergency response plans and strong pollution prevention measures by industry. During the 1990s, the League continued the fight, advocating expansion of community right-to-know provisions in the renewal of the *Resource Conservation and Recovery Act* (RCRA). It was also successful in defeating congressional efforts to pass regulatory reform legislation aimed at crippling the adoption and enforcement of environmental protection regulations.

In 1996, the League joined 24 public interest organizations in supporting the President’s move to phase out the use of methyl bromide, an extremely toxic pesticide. Also, LWVUS and 84 national, international, and local



organizations jointly urged Congress to cosponsor the *Children's Environmental Protection Act of 1997* (CEPA), which sought to ensure a citizen's right to know if there are harmful toxins in the environment.

In 1996, the Department of Energy asked LWVEF to help develop a National Dialogue on Nuclear Materials and Waste Management. Pilot field workshops were held in 1997, but the Dialogue was opposed by some environmentalists and state officials. LWVEF held two discussions in San Diego and Chicago on nuclear material and waste in 1998 and issued a report.

The League continued activism in the 2010s by joining millions of activists at the largest climate rallies in history. In 2013, the League joined environmental groups, women's groups, and social justice groups as a sponsor of the Forward on Climate rally in Washington, DC. In 2014, the League became a sponsor of the People's Climate March, which brought together the largest group of activists working on meaningful action on climate change. Leagues joined the main march in New York City and also sister marches in cities around the country and the world to help show lawmakers and administration officials that there is strong public support for policies that promote solutions to climate change.

In 2002, the LWVUS submitted comments in support of the Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) proposed amendment to rules under the *Securities Act of 1933* and *Securities Exchange Act of 1934* to require corporations to release climate-risk information to its shareholders.

## Federal Agriculture Policies

### The League's Positions

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*Statement of Position on Federal Agriculture Policy, as announced by the national board, October 1988 and updated, May 2014:*

**LWVUS believes that federal agriculture policies should promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers, farms that are economically viable, farm practices that are environmentally sound, and increased reliance on the free market to determine prices.**

#### *Sustainable Agriculture*

**Federal policy should encourage a system of sustainable, regenerative agricultural production that moves toward an environmentally sound agricultural sector. This includes promoting stewardship to preserve and protect the country's human and natural agricultural resources.**

#### *Research and Development*

**Agricultural research, development, and technical assistance should continue to be a major federal function. Resources should be targeted to developing sustainable agricultural practices and addressing the needs of mid-size farms.**

