

2017-2019 PROGRAM PLANNING PACKET

Time Line: Return response form to Pat Thompson by January 27, 2017, at contact@lwvnj.org. A word doc attachment is preferred.

In anticipation of the upcoming LWVNJ Convention each local League should review all our present positions and recommend which we should retain, drop or update. They can also suggest new studies or consensus positions. The LWVNJ Board will use these to make recommendations, and local League delegates will discuss and vote on them at the convention.

Suggestions for your program planning meeting:

- Involve as many members as possible, exploring ways to entice them. Make it a social gathering—holiday party, pizza & program, or “pot luck” meal—so members can reconnect with each other.
- Invite some prospects. While non-members cannot participate in the consensus portion of the meeting, this is a good way for them to learn about the process the League uses to come to positions and the wide range of issues we work on.
- The program VP or a knowledgeable program director or member is a good choice for leading the meeting. Select a secretary for the meeting to record minutes.
- Involve as many members as you can in presenting and discussing the positions.
- If possible, circulate the Position Summary ahead of time so that members have a chance to prepare and the meeting can move more quickly.
- Provide each attendee with a copy of the Response Form so that members have a clear sense of the decisions that must be made.

Resources:

- Study & Action 2015-2017 (LWVNJ), available in hard copy for \$5 from the League office or at http://lwvnj.org/images/issues/2015-2017_Study&Action.pdf
- Copies of Response form at <http://lwvnj.org/members.html>

Meeting Outline

- Introduction—purpose of meeting and background information
- Discussion of program areas; determination of member recommendations to drop, reaffirm or update each item
- Consideration of a new study (see guidelines below).

DEFINITIONS, CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

Reaffirm a position

Definition: Members are committed to the position and will be involved in supporting LWVNJ efforts to pursue position's goals. *Member understanding and agreement exist.*

Criteria: This is the option you will choose if you do not want to drop or update a position.

Drop a position

Definition: Position is not useful in its present form or is not supported by members. If delegates at convention drop a position, LWVNJ cannot use the position to lobby. Any future action must be taken on other related positions or will require a new study.

Criteria: consider the following questions

- Is the position still meaningful today?
- Does the position represent current member thinking?
- Do members care enough about the position to take action and devote resources to it?

Guidelines: List reasoning of members for recommendation to drop under “Comments.”

Update a position

Definition: A study of limited scope to reevaluate an existing position in light of new information, changed circumstances, and/or conflict with another existing position.

Criteria: consider the following questions:

- Is new information available that might change the position?
- Have the circumstances surrounding the position changed significantly?
- Does the position conflict with another League position?
- Do members need a thorough update in order to have the understanding necessary to take action?
- Are there gaps in the position?

Guidelines:

1. **The scope of the update must accompany your recommendation.** The scope defines the parameters or limits of the update—the specific areas you wish to reexamine or expand and questions you want answered by the update.
2. **Include an estimate of time and resources that are needed to accomplish the update.** Do we have members with expertise or connections to those with expertise to gather needed research materials?
3. Consider **looking for allies among other local Leagues** to insure sufficient people resources to accomplish the limited study and to support it at convention.

New Study

Definition: Topic for member research and discussion in order to reach consensus and establish a position upon which LWVNJ may take action. A new study is usually a two-year process.

Criteria: consider the following questions:

- Assuming a two-year process to reach consensus, is the timing right to allow the League to act on the new position?
- Will League involvement make a difference?
- Is the issue one on which most League members will spend time and effort to study and come to consensus?
- Are members in your local League able to lead or participate in a study committee?

Guidelines:

- 1) Wording of a new study item should be easily understood, general enough for flexibility, yet specific enough to indicate the desired goals and scope.
- 2) **A statement of scope of the study must accompany your recommendation.** The scope defines the parameters of the study. It is an explanation in more detail of the limits outlined in the wording. It shows how broad or narrow an approach you wish to take.
- 3) **Include an estimate of time and resources that are needed to accomplish the study.**
- 4) **Consider looking for allies among other local Leagues** to insure sufficient people are available to research the issue, prepare meeting-ready materials for local Leagues, develop consensus questions, tally consensus responses and write the position.

Decide if you wish to propose a consensus or concurrence process.

Consensus in the League is the process by which members, after study and group discussion, reach agreement, AND it is also the agreement reached, representing the “sense of the meeting” as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions. It is more than a simple majority, although it is not necessarily unanimity.

Concurrence is agreeing with a statement of position. A concurrence can be with what the Study Committee recommends or on a position reached by another League.

Procedure for Update or New Study: Study Committee Tasks

- Examine wording and scope approved by delegates and gather research materials
- Determine what background materials should be recommended to local Leagues.
- Develop consensus questions or concurrence statement.
- Prepare meeting-ready discussion guide for local Leagues consensus or concurrence meeting.
- Evaluate responses and analyze against criteria for a valid state consensus or concurrence.
- Prepare position statement for consideration by the LWVNJ Board.

POSITIONS IN BRIEF

Refer to *Study & Action 2015-2017* for the complete text and history of current positions.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

- **Death Penalty:** Oppose capital punishment under any circumstances and for any type of crime. Life imprisonment without possibility of parole is the appropriate alternative.
- **Family Court:** Support adequate funding and training of personnel.
- **Juvenile Justice:** Support rehabilitation programs including a broad range of graduated sanctions and services and adequate funding for community based facilities. Support measures to reduce disproportionate representation of minority youth in the system and a single independent state level agency.
- **Mediation in the Municipal Courts:** Support statewide implementation of mediation programs.

EDUCATION

- **Charter Schools:** Support charter schools to encourage innovation within the public schools, while preserving the public character of public education. Traditional public school districts should be protected from arbitrary funding changes with respect to charter school funding.
- **Private School Choice:** Oppose use of public funds to support students in non-public schools.
- **Public School Funding:** See Public Education Funding under Fiscal Policy.
- **School District Regionalization:** Support decision-making by citizens of affected districts, so long as right to equal educational access is not abridged. Support merger of some types of districts into a regional district, others into single k-12 districts, and elimination of districts with less than 500 students. Support revision of decision-making process for changes in tax-allocation formula. Oppose formation of countywide districts.
- **State Role in Achieving Quality Education:** Support the sharing of responsibility between state and local school boards for educational outcomes; support state assistance and monitoring; state-set curriculum content standards, and structural flexibility.
- **Teacher Certification and Professional Development:** Support continuation and improvement of the alternative route to certification to assure substantive training, valid evaluation and appropriate support. Support periodic renewal of certification and requirement of continuing professional development.
- **Tenure:** Support elimination of tenure for administrators.

FISCAL POLICY

- **Dedication of Taxes:** Oppose the constitutional dedication of taxes.

- **Public School Funding:** Promote state fiscal measures to improve and equalize opportunities for public education including aid for school facilities and adequate support for children with special needs. Protect school districts from arbitrary funding changes. State education mandates should be used to meet educational standards, include significant state funding and adequate time for implementation.
- **Tax and Spending Limits:** Support limits on taxation and spending by school districts, municipal, county and state governments.
- **Tax and Spending Policy:** Promote sound fiscal policies through a progressive and equitable tax structure with adequate revenue to provide state and local services to meet the needs of New Jersey citizens. Support measures to reduce dependence on the local property tax and disparities in tax rates and services among communities.

GOVERNMENT

- **Campaign Finance:** Support an open and accountable system including contribution and expenditure disclosure and limitations. Support a system of public and private funding.
- **Independent Commissions and Authorities:** Support accountability, openness, coordination in planning between commissions and authorities and oversight by executive branch.
- **Lieutenant Governor:** Support office with defined responsibilities and succession for remainder of elected term.
- **Structures and Procedures:** Support longer staggered terms and single member districts.
- **Voting Rights for Parolees and Probationers:** Support restoring voting rights to all parolees and probationers who are U.S. citizens.

NATURAL RESOURCES

- **Planning for Growth:** Support a comprehensive state planning policy for land use decisions which includes open space conservation, habitat preservation for biodiversity, farmland preservation, provision of low and moderate-income housing consistent with environmental policies and historic preservation. Support watershed management, storm water management, non-structural approaches to flood damage reduction in all river basins and education and enforcement programs to eliminate both non-point and point source pollution. Support a transportation planning process that provides all segments of the population with a minimum level of mobility, contributes to sound land use planning, is consistent with local and regional development goals, considers energy conservation and environmental protection and enhances the social and economic welfare of all state residents.
- **Coastal Zone:** Support planning which leads to best possible outcome for people, land and coast.
- **Radioactive Waste:** Public health and safety should be the primary considerations in managing radioactive wastes. Greater weight should be given to prevention of

environmental degradation over economic constraints.

- **Solid Waste Management:** Strategies for managing municipal solid waste should be implemented in the following order: source reduction, recycling, waste-to-energy, and landfill.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation:** Support use of public monies to subsidize both operating and capital costs of public transportation.

WOMEN & FAMILY ISSUES

- **Child Care:** Promote state efforts to increase the availability of quality child care service.
- **Domestic Violence:** Support measures that protect victims and survivors.
- **Family Life Education:** Support the teaching of comprehensive family life education in the public schools.
- **Legal Status of Women:** Promote laws that protect the rights of women. Support revisions of property and inheritance laws, expeditious and less costly divorce procedures, equitable distribution statutes, strengthening of laws regarding disclosure of assets and methods for collecting support payments.
- **Reproductive Rights/Public Policy on Abortion:** Support the right of the individual to make the choice of whether or not to terminate a pregnancy.
- **Human Trafficking:** Oppose all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking.