



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF
AMHERST
PROGRAM BOOK
2014-2015 Edition

League of Women Voters of Amherst
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League of Women Voters of Amherst

2014-2015

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ABOUT THE LEAGUE

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League operates on three levels: the national and state levels, which were established in 1920; and at the local level. The Amherst League was organized in 1939.

League members study issues of local, state, and national significance and establish policy positions on issues through member participation and agreement - League consensus. Official League action comes after members agree on a position. The League may act by providing information to the public, obtaining public support for the position, lobbying, initiating legislation, or participating in court action. This League of Women Voters of Amherst Program Book summarizes the League's current national, state, and local (Amherst) positions.

The League promotes political responsibility through its Voters' Service and Citizen Education activities. Members register voters, organize candidates' forums, publish voting guides, and disseminate general information on the legislative process and the function of government on the local, state, and national levels.

The League of Women Voters never supports a candidate or political party although members are encouraged to work as individuals in partisan activities.

*Additional information about the League of Women Voters
and specific voter information is available on the League websites listed below.*

LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST

The League will take action locally as appropriate on the State and National programs and the following Local Program. (Year position adopted in parentheses.)

LOCAL PROGRAM (2014)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT Concepts, Principles, and Practices (2003)

The League supports the following concepts, principles, and practices that make for effective local government.

We believe local government should maximize:

- a. Widespread and inclusive participation
 - Hearing of diverse points of view encourages involvement.
 - Being part of the process creates understanding and ownership of decisions.
 - Expression of various opinions promotes a sense of inclusion.
- b. Diversity of the community reflected in government
 - Accessibility fosters commitment, vitality, and fairness.
 - Diversity of opinion is more important than striving for demographic quotas.
- c. Openness and full disclosure
 - Citizens have a right to expect an open process in local government.
 - Openness early in the decision process allows citizens to be part of the process.
 - Agendas and decisions should be publicized in a timely fashion.
 - Adherence to Massachusetts Open Meeting Law must be strictly maintained.
 - Citizens have a right to expect full disclosure of the facts pertinent to the decision process.
- d. Checks and balance of power among the executive, legislative, and administrative branches of government and the electorate
 - Shared responsibility among the various branches of government creates balance.
 - Not all appointments should be made by any one branch of government.
 - Referenda opportunities make the electorate part of the process.
 - Referendum process should not be too easy or too difficult.

- e. Honesty and non-corrupibility in all decision making
 Access to decision makers should be open to all.
 Town officials and appointees should not be susceptible to undue influence or beholden to special interests.
- f. Efficiency based on professional management and timely decision making
 Efficiency is important in the delivery of essential services.
 In the policy-making process, efficiency is not as important as open and informed deliberation and citizen participation.
 All issues, including those brought up by citizen petitions and requests, should be acted upon in a timely manner so that the decision will be meaningful.
- g. Accountability for political and fiscal decisions
 Decision makers should make clear the rationale for their decisions.
 The process of implementing decisions should be clear and understandable.
 Full explanation of budget and appropriation items should be disclosed during deliberations.

STRUCTURE OF TOWN GOVERNMENT

Executive Branch (1972, 1990, 2008)

The League supports:

An overall plan for citizen boards including:

- a. A clearly-stated mission for each board.
- b. Well-defined lines of authority concerning the role of the board, the role of the support staff, and the relationship of the board with the Select Board, the Town Manager, and other Town departments.
- c. Known and clearly-defined procedures for assuring communication among boards, especially among groups of boards with common areas of concern; between boards and the Select Board, between boards and the Town Manager, and between boards and the public.
- d. An attempt to control the proliferation of boards by the use of existing boards whenever practicable and by periodic review of boards, combining them when appropriate.

Timely assignment of members of the Select Board to serve as liaisons to town committees and boards.

- a. Liaisons should obtain a sense of the committee's work by: reading agendas and minutes of committee meetings; maintaining contact with the committee chairperson; and attending committee meetings whenever possible.
- b. The liaison should communicate between the committee and Select Board by reporting as necessary and serving as a resource.

Clear procedural guidelines for conduct of business by town boards, including:

- a. Early and widely publicized notice of board meetings.
- b. Advance publicity for substantive agenda items.
- c. Draft minutes should be available to committee members and liaisons following each meeting so that minutes can be approved as the first agenda item at the subsequent meeting.
- d. Approved minutes should be filed promptly in the Select Board office.
- e. Each committee should set its own guidelines and criteria for citizen participation.
- f. Each committee should seek a balance between public input and the effective completion of the work of the committee.
- g. Regular procedure for informing public of vacancies on town boards
- h. Prompt filling of vacancies.

A program of orientation for new members of town boards

- a. The orientation process should be ongoing, formal, unbiased, and appropriate to the position.
- b. A general orientation meeting for committee members should provide appropriate documents and a basic understanding of committee process.
- c. The committee chair should be responsible for orientation of new members.

Staff assistance for town boards:

- a. Utilization of paid secretarial help.
- b. Appointment of a part-time Town Counsel, taking precautions to avoid conflict of interest.

Careful consideration of appointments and reappointments to town boards including:

- a. Provision for citizen input in the appointive process.
- b. Broadened notification for informing the public of vacancies on town boards.
- c. Policy of "no automatic reappointment".
- d. Balance between new and continuing members.

The League supports selectmen-manager form of government (1950, 1995)

Legislative Branch (1970, 1990)

The League supports:

Measures to increase the responsiveness and quality of Town Meeting:

- a. Greater visibility of Town Meeting members.
- b. Adequate information prior to Town Meetings to both Town Meeting members and citizens.

- c. More than one regularly scheduled Town Meeting each year.
- d. Utilization of committees of Town Meeting or sub-committees of the Finance Committee to consider issues in greater depth.
- e. Procedures, clearly stated and uniformly enforced, to provide for streamlined and efficient Town Meetings.
- f. Measures to increase participation in selecting representatives in all precincts by encouraging citizens to run for office and to vote.

COMPENSATION FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES (1960)

The League supports provision of adequate compensation to the Town of Amherst for municipal services rendered to the University of Massachusetts, Hampshire College, and Amherst College.

MASTER PLANNING (1970)

The League supports measures to provide for:

- a. Sound long-range planning.
- b. Regular review and updating of zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations.
- c. Location of apartments in dispersed clusters with special attention to traffic patterns, efficient land use, and preservation of open space.
- d. Periodic review of policies on density.
- e. Preservation of open space.
- f. Regulation of septic tanks and sewer expansion.
- g. Long-range capital planning.
- h. Sound traffic planning.

TRANSPORTATION (1971)

The League supports:

Transportation planning which involves professionals and nonprofessionals at all stages.

The application of the following considerations in road planning: community goals and needs, bicycle safety, traffic circulation and control, environmental impact, social impact, source of funding.

Public transportation in Amherst.

LOW AND MODERATE INCOME HOUSING (2001)

(incorporating positions adopted in 1966, 1978, and 1987)

The League supports provision of a variety of low and moderate income housing, both public and private, consistent with community needs:

Measures to achieve this goal could include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Rehabilitation of houses and apartment units.
- b. Conversions of garages, barns, and businesses applied with consideration of the impact on neighborhoods.
- c. Congregate housing.

The League also supports zoning and other land use policies that provide for such housing and for open space, for example:

- a. Clusters, Planned Unit Residential Developments (PURDs), village centers.
- b. Moderate increases in the number of attached dwellings and in density as bonuses for construction of low and moderate income housing.
- c. Re-evaluation of height and density regulations within the zoning bylaw.

Consideration should also be given to the following:

- a. Balancing housing needs with other social and environmental needs, except that protection of the water supply is not subject to compromise.
- b. An effective permit system which includes opportunities for citizen input.
- c. Adequate inspection services in order to maintain the quality of rental housing.
- d. A citizens' committee to mediate between landlords and tenants, to provide information to landlords, tenants and the general public, and to make recommendations regarding rental issues.

Evaluation and efforts by the University to fulfill student housing needs are encouraged.

POLICE (1977)

The League supports:

Measures to provide for:

- a. Equal lay/officer participation in the initial screening process.
- b. The hiring of qualified women and minority candidates.
- c. Greater flexibility in the hiring of candidates with previous experience elsewhere.
- d. Residency requirements.
- e. Financial incentives for officers to gain education at the college level.
- f. Training and education in police/community relations.
- g. A professional police force sensitive to the needs of all segments of the community and accessible to the public.

A citizens' committee to review law enforcement policies and procedures. Such policies and procedures should be available in written form and accessible to the public in libraries.

The present written procedure for handling citizen complaints about police conduct. Emphasis on publicizing its use and availability at police station, town hall and libraries.

Greater community/police department exchange of information.

A program for special officers to include: for specials substituting for regulars the same standards of recruitment and training as for regular officers; continuation of community service officer program.

HEALTH (1981)

The League supports measures to provide for:

- a. Health education in the public schools, including a mandatory integrated program in the elementary schools, a mandatory course in the junior high school, and some form of health instruction in the senior high school.
- b. An adequately staffed, smoothly functioning system of health services in the public schools of Amherst.
- c. A direct information and referral service in the Amherst area as a means of handling questions about health services.
- d. A home health service that meets generally accepted standards for scope, quality, and availability.
- e. Preventive programs in the field of health.
- f. A sound program of environmental health services for the town.

FLUORIDATION (1984)

The League supports fluoridation of the Amherst water supply at the level recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

CHILD CARE (1984)

The League supports a continuing role by the Town of Amherst as an advocate and facilitator of quality child care; a limited role by the town as a direct provider of child care services or contributor of financial aid to families for such services.

The League supports town policies, programs, and services that include:

A committee on child care composed of representatives of appropriate policy boards of the town and other public agencies, providers, and citizens-at-large to:

- a. Monitor needs and services
- b. Advise town meeting and town agencies

Financial support of an area-wide information and referral service.

On-going needs assessment using the resources of a regional information and referral service, the schools, the town and other agencies as appropriate.

Advocacy of adequate assistance by the state and federal governments (see positions of the LWV-US and LWV-M.)

Consideration of child care needs in designing recreational and school programs.

Rent-free space in town and school buildings for child care services that meet appropriate criteria for need, quality, and access; development of such criteria.

Programs for school-age children before and after school and during vacations if so indicated by needs assessments, with funding through fees, earmarked state and federal assistance, and limited support from local taxation.

Measures to permit participation without financial hardship—for all child care programs supported or operated by the town and schools.

Child care assistance for town and school employees as an alternative fringe benefit and opportunities for flex time, job sharing, maternity and paternity leaves.

Zoning by-laws that do not restrict the establishment of licensed child care services.

RECREATION (1968)

The League supports measures to provide for:

- a. A wide variety of facilities and opportunities for enriching recreational experiences for all persons regardless of age and sex.
- b. Creative and efficient use of present facilities including schools.
- c. The planned acquisition of land to meet future recreational needs.
- d. The continued services of a full-time, professional recreation director.
- e. A fee schedule which should not exclude any residents from participating in public recreation programs.

LIBRARIES (1967)

The League supports measures to assure the continued excellence of Amherst's school and public libraries:

- a. Fair and competitive compensation for library employees.
- b. Adequate collections at the town and school libraries.
- c. Cooperation between school and public libraries.

EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS (2012)

The League supports the following concepts, principles and practices for effective and successful education of our students and operation of our schools:

The primary goals of education are to encourage all students' potential in problem solving, creativity, and social interaction. To achieve those goals, the schools will instruct students in:

- academic areas such as verbal arts, reading, writing, social studies, science, mathematics, and the arts;
- social relationship skills and confidence;
- life-long learning aptitude; and
- physical, creative and emotional development.

The League recognizes that the well-being of the student is dependent upon the family, the community and the schools. The League is committed to a just and equitable school system for all students with particular attention to ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities, lower socioeconomic households, and to those with special educational needs.

To prepare students for the challenges and citizenship in an evolving global environment, and for colleges and the workplace when they graduate, schools need to:

- give critical attention to early childhood education;
- integrate advances in science and technology;
- reflect the best advances in cognitive and neurosciences as it relates to education;
- provide understanding and skills for citizenship in a democracy;
- provide proficiency in world cultures and languages;
- provide current technological equipment and skills.

School Districts should have:

- effective and efficient management;
- physical infrastructure (buildings and grounds) to provide a safe and healthy environment;
- financial support for these positions.

Communication is fundamental for good working relationships between the schools and community in all of the aforementioned areas

SCHOOLS (1961, 1973, 1983)

BUILDINGS

The League supports buildings adequate to serve our population and acquisition of land for future school sites as needed. (1961)

Assigns high priority to maintenance of physical plant and equipment with the goals of preserving a healthful and safe environment and achieving long-term cost savings. (1983)

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (1973)

The League supports measures to encourage citizen participation in the development of school policies:

- a. Open hearings before adopting new or expanded programs, including consideration of their long-term costs.
- b. Public availability of all pertinent information such as state laws relating to schools, state and local policies, and regulations.
- c. A program-oriented budget, readily understandable, and available also in summary form.
- d. Continuing communication between school committee and parent organizations.
- e. System-wide guidelines for parent organizations.

SCHOOL FINANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION (1983)

The League supports a quality education for all students according to their needs and abilities.

The League recognizes that the resources now devoted to public education in Amherst are, in the aggregate, adequate to meet basic goals and that there are competing needs for inherently limited resources. In view of expected fluctuations in school enrollments, possible decreases in revenues, and potential needs to increase expenditures in certain areas, the League has developed a statement of priorities, together with related positions on staffing, programs, and the use of outside revenue.^{1,2}

a. Instructional programs (See also Section c below)

The League assigns highest priority to the basic curriculum³, stresses the importance of offering sufficient sections of fundamental courses at the secondary level (e.g., American history and biology) so that students who

¹ Omission means only that the League has not taken a position on an item.

² See School Department documents for definitions of such terms as support programs, pupil and program support, extracurricular activities, and elementary special subject teachers.

³ The part of the curriculum needed by all students, whatever their plans or goals. This includes social studies, science, mathematics, elementary language arts, and secondary English.

desire them are not excluded; to this end would accept a moderate and carefully considered reduction in the variety of courses offered.

Assigns high priority to special education, remedial reading and remedial mathematics. Supports the integration of pupils with special needs into the regular classroom to the degree that is deemed practical and educationally desirable; supports continuous evaluation of the special education program and placements to assure efficiency.

Supports the elementary art, classroom music, and physical education programs and the secondary extracurricular programs (including athletics). (See also Section d.)

Supports a comprehensive program of health education in the schools. (See Position on Health.)

Supports computer instruction with the goal of equipping all high school graduates with appropriate understanding and skills. Recommends an evaluation of the costs and effectiveness of the program.

Supports the elementary instrumental music program but recognizes that supplemental funds from such sources as donations may in time be required. (See also Section d.)

- b. Support Programs (See also Sections c and d and Position on School Buildings.)
The League assigns high priority to the secondary guidance program, the elementary counseling program, and the school libraries. Supports adequate guidance and counseling programs where needed.

Supports adequate audio-visual program.

- c. Staffing

The League assigns highest priority to fair and competitive compensation with the goal of attracting and retaining an excellent teaching staff.

Believes that the present school policies⁴ provide class sizes that promote educational excellence; would accept well-considered increases in class sizes if fiscal constraints become greater.

Would accept a carefully considered reduction in the number of special subject teachers in the elementary schools if enrollments or revenues decline.

Would accept a limited reduction of staff for pupil and program support in case of declines in revenue or enrollment.

Supports a limited reduction in administrative staff.

⁴FY'83 recommended elementary school ratio: 1 classroom teacher for 22 pupils. FY'83 secondary school class sizes vary with the type and level studied. (FY'93 ratios remain the same.)

d. Fees and Revenues

The League supports school policy of charging fees for driver education.

Supports the present policy of funding the school meals program through a combination of sales, earmarked federal and state assistance, and nominal local appropriations; if necessary to maintain the financial stability of the program or to prevent hardship, supports an increase in local public funding. Supports a review of the program with particular attention to nutrition, palatability, and economy.

Opposes the extension of user fees (except as noted above); where fees are used, supports measures to permit participation without hardship.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (2008)

To foster a healthy business environment and to enhance the vitality and economic prosperity of the Town of Amherst, the League of Women Voters:

- supports clear, efficient and well coordinated permitting, licensing and inspection procedures and processes.
- supports zoning consistent with the goals of a community-developed comprehensive plan.
- does not support expansion or improvement of infrastructure made at town expense in speculation of business or industrial development, but would support such improvements upon application by developers if such can be negotiated and would result in future income to offset the expense.
- encourages collaboration with the University and colleges in order to foster economic vitality.
- supports the general concept of regional collaboration on economic and business development.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING (2010)

Given that the Federal and Massachusetts Emergency Management Agencies (FEMA and MEMA) mandate that every city and town have emergency preparedness plans, the League supports:

- Regular updating and testing of the Amherst plans.
- Ongoing coordination among the plans of the town, University of Massachusetts, Amherst College, and Hampshire College.
- Ongoing regional planning, cooperation and coordination of effort during emergencies by area towns and institutions.
- The development and use of trained civilian volunteers as part of the emergency response.
- The dissemination of advisory emergency information to individuals, families and businesses to help them prepare for emergency situations and understand their responsibilities.

BIOMASS (2011)

Recognizing that the use of woody biomass as a fuel in electric generating and heating facilities may result in health and environmental problems, the Amherst League of Women Voters supports its use only if government regulations are in place which appropriately address the following:

- Types of woody biomass which may be used.
- Sustainable forest management practices and forest preservation.
- Size and efficiency of biomass-fueled electric generating and heating facilities.
- Emission limits including, but not limited to, those of greenhouse gases and particulate matter.
- Effective enforcement procedures.

ENERGY POLICY (2013)

The current energy supply and production mix, especially the dependence on fossil fuels, is unsustainable in the long term, and damaging to the environment and to human health in the short term. Furthermore, a greater diversity of energy sources is needed to ensure the long-term stability of energy supply, especially in New England.

The League supports:

- major efforts, including increased public education, to decrease energy use through conservation measures and increased efficiency of energy use;
- increased use of renewable and “green” energy sources, especially wind and solar; and improvements to the electric grid to accommodate intermittent electric power sources;
- a continuing decrease in reliance on fossil fuels, especially coal;
- no increase in the reliance on nuclear energy until safer power plant designs are available and there is a solution to the long term safe storage of spent nuclear fuel;
- appropriate and sustained incentives at all levels of government to achieve the above goals.

HAMPSHIRE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (HCOG) (2005)

The League supports the concept of regional cooperation although the Town of Amherst is not a member of the Hampshire Council of Governments. This support reflects consideration of the LWVMA stand on the need for accountable and effective county/regional government.

CONNECTICUT RIVER BASIN INTER-LEAGUE PROGRAM (1965, 1966)

The League supports measures which provide for:

- a. Management and development of natural resources so as to enhance and protect the unique character of the Connecticut River Basin and to protect, maintain or restore its function as a green belt within the eastern megalopolis for the greater benefit of the populace whether urban, suburban, or rural.
- b. Water quality suitable for swimming and water contact sports which will provide an excellent habitat for fish and wildlife
- c. Land use controls which will achieve the following goals:
 - Maintain flood plains for flood protection, open space, and recreation.
 - Protect salt marshes as an economic investment in fish and shellfish production.
 - Protect bogs and swamps to preserve water supplies and wildlife habitats.
 - Preserve farm lands as a long-time economic investment and for visual enjoyment.
 - Maintain and protect open spaces, historic sites, and scenic overlooks.
 - Protect river banks from erosion and incompatible use. (e.g., town dumps)
- d. Development of a wide variety of recreation facilities with particular attention to the needs of our urban population for easily accessible recreation facilities. The type of development and its location should be governed by the character of the land in order to maintain environmental quality. Facilities for recreational boating should include protected areas for canoes and sailboats; restrictions should insure boating safety and tolerable noise levels
- e. Coordination of the activities of all levels of government and the private sector through regional and inter-governmental arrangements.

LOCAL STUDIES (2014-2015)

Continuation of Energy Study

This study will focus on energy use in the transportation sector and the issues involved in the hydraulic fracturing process used to obtain oil and natural gas from deposits in deep underground shale formations.

STATE PROGRAM (2011-2013)

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

WHERE WE STAND - PROGRAM IN BRIEF

Representative Government

County Government and Regional Planning

An effective state government; an intermediate level of government to solve regional problems, either through a revised county structure or an emerging regionalism; regional planning on a statewide basis; high visibility for county and/or regional government; and home rule for counties. (1984)

Courts

A judicial system that provides equal justice for all through effective, modern administration, qualified judicial personnel, a strengthened probation service, and procedures and practices that ensure due process of law.

Executive branch

An effective state government; a strong executive branch with lines of authority and responsibility clearly defined. (1963)

Fiscal policy

A state and local tax structure that will have an equitable impact on taxpayers and adequately support state services with consideration of the effect on the state and local economies; distribution of state aid in a manner that will equalize municipal resources; a comprehensive state budget system that will provide a basis for the evaluation of the cost and effectiveness of current state programs and long-range capital expenditures; up-to-date, uniform and accurate property valuation; and efficient management of the revenue collection systems. (1969-1979, 1992-93)

Home rule

An effective state government; home rule for Massachusetts cities and towns in local matters. (1966)

Legislature

An effective state government; a strong and highly visible legislative branch, districted on the basis of population into contiguous, compact, single-member districts by an appointed, bipartisan commission and that maintains its traditional role as a democratic forum. (1967)

Public personnel

A public personnel system based upon merit principles and enlightened practices. (1969)

Social Policy

Child abuse prevention and treatment

The prevention of child abuse and neglect; the protection and care of children experiencing abuse and neglect. (1991)

Corrections

A sound corrections system which provides opportunities for the rehabilitation of the adult and juvenile offender. (pre-1965 position)

Day care

A coordinated state policy for quality day care for the children of Massachusetts with adequate funding for implementation by the responsible state agencies. (1984)

Domestic Violence

The prevention of domestic violence. A strong statewide response to domestic violence that is integrated, interdisciplinary, and adequately funded, involving all segments of the criminal justice system, the medical community, the schools, social services, and the private sector, with a primary focus on the safety of victims.

Handgun control

Elimination of the private possession of handguns (1974) and assault weapons (1989).

Health care

An affordable health care system that provides equal access to quality health care for all. (1983)

Housing

Access to decent housing and a suitable living environment affordable for all. The League supports programs, policies and regulations to address the housing needs of low- and moderate-income families and individuals, which should include (2008):

Legalized casino gambling

Opposition to establishment of legalized casino gambling in Massachusetts. (1982)

Reproductive choices

Freedom of individuals to make informed reproductive decisions based on their own convictions and beliefs. (1972)

Transportation

Support a transportation system to move people and goods which includes a variety of transportation modes, with emphasis on increased public transportation services and other viable alternatives to reduce vehicle miles traveled; is efficient, convenient, and cost effective; is safe and secure; serves all segments of the population and diverse geographic needs; minimizes harmful effects on the environment; is integrated with land use; and is supported by extensive public

LWVMA STUDY (2013 - 2015)

A new study, "Massachusetts after Citizens United. SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?" will consider whether or not the League's existing campaign finance positions are adequate to meet the challenges of Citizens United and related recent Supreme Court decisions, and if not, what additional positions are needed.

NATIONAL PROGRAM (2012-2014)

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote. Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation. Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

Election Process

Apportionment. Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

Campaign Finance. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

Selection of the President. Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct-popular-vote. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.

Citizen Rights

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation. Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision-making.

Individual Liberties. Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.

Public Policy on Reproductive Choices. Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Congress and the Presidency

Congress. Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision making capability and effective performance.

The Presidency. Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

Privatization

Ensure transparency, accountability, positive community impact and preservation of the common good when considering the transfer of governmental services, assets and/or functions to the private sector.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

United Nations

Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.

Trade

Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries.

Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

Arms Control

Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

Military Policy and Defense Spending

Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

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

Natural Resources

Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

Resource Management

Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control

Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

Air Quality. Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

Energy. Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

Land Use. Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.

Water Resources. Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

Waste Management. Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

Nuclear Issues. Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

Public Participation

Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

Agriculture Policy

Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

SOCIAL POLICY

Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

Equality of Opportunity

Equal Rights. Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.

Education, Employment and Housing. Support equal access to education, employment and housing.

Federal Role in Public Education. Support federal policies that provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12.

Fiscal Policy

Tax Policy. Support adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that relies primarily on a broad-based income tax.

Federal Deficit. Promote responsible deficit policies.

Funding of Entitlements. Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

Health Care

Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.

Immigration

Promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas. Ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Income Assistance. Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.

Support Services. Provide essential support services.

Housing Supply. Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

Child Care

Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.

Violence Prevention

Support violence prevention programs in communities.

Gun Control

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

Urban Policy

Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

Death Penalty

The LWVUS supports abolition of the death penalty.

Sentencing Policy

The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among levels of government, effective enforcement and well defined channels for citizen input and review.

LWVUS STUDY AND REVIEWS (2014 - 2016)

1. A study of the process of amending the U.S. Constitution, including constitutional conventions;
2. A review and update of the League position on campaign finance in light of forty years of change since the Watergate reforms, in order to enhance member understanding of the new schemes and structures used to influence elections and erode protections against corruption in our political process, and to review possible responses to counter them in the current environment of rapid change; and
3. A review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress, through the existing redistricting task force, for the purpose of developing action steps.



MISSION

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

THE PRESIDENTS OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST

Joy Kennedy (Mrs. Gail)	1939-1941
Elizabeth Rohr (Mrs. Charles)	1941-1943
Frances Warne (Mrs. Colston)	1943-1945
Marian Brown (Mrs. Bailey)	1945-1947
Eunice Mannheim (Mrs. L. Robert)	1947-1949
Janet Dakin (Mrs. Winthrop)	1949-1951
Ruth Skillings (Mrs. Hills)	1951-1953
Vera Longstaff (Mrs. John)	1953-1955
Edna Emerson (Mrs. Edward)	1955-1957
Lucy Benson (Mrs. Bruce)	1957-1958
Janet Dakin (Mrs. Winthrop)	1958-1959
Lucy Benson (Mrs. Bruce)	1959-1961
Rhoda Honigberg (Mrs. Bronislaw)	*1961-1963
Rita Kropf (Mrs. Allen)	**1963-1965
Nancy Eddy (Mrs. Philip)	1965-1967
Barbara Ford (Mrs. Norman)	1967-1969
Sally Klingener	1969-1971
Emma Jean Cole (Mrs. Charles)	1971-1973
Kathleen Masalski (Mrs. William)	1973-1975
Kay Moran (Mrs. Charles)	1975-1977
Lynne Stuart (Mrs. Bruce)	1977-1979
Dona Motts (Mrs. Ward)	1979-1981
Myrna Hewitt (Mrs. John)	1981-1983
Diana Romer (Mrs. Robert)	1983-1985
Joan Lambdin (Mrs. John)	1985-1987
Diana Romer (Mrs. Robert)	1987-1989
Lois Dethier	1989-1991
Harriett Shapiro	1991-1993
Joan Flood Ashwell	1993-1996
Myrna Hewitt	1996-1997
Caroline Olsen	1997-2001
Eva Cashdan	2001-2003
Mary Ann Garrand	2003-2005
Janice Ratner	2005-2007
Carol Rothery	2007-2009
Eva Cashdan	2009-2011
Rebecca Fricke	***2011-2012
Cynthia Brubaker/Katherine Vorwerk Feldman	2013-2015

* In 1961 Esther Dimock was elected president and resigned soon after when she was appointed Town Clerk

** In 1963 Mabel Garis was elected president but resigned shortly thereafter.

*** Rebecca Fricke resigned in December of 2012.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST
BOX 2372
Amherst, Massachusetts 01004-2372

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