

LWVNM POSITIONS
Last updated in March, 2010

GOVERNMENT

The Constitution (Adopted 1969)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports a New Mexico Constitution which is concise and comprehensible, providing a basic framework adaptable to present and future needs of state government. LWVNM supports a less restrictive amending process in the Constitution.

The Executive (Adopted 1969; revised 1983, 1995)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports four-year terms for state executive officers, preferably elected in non-presidential years with limitation of two consecutive terms in the same office. LWVNM supports a shortened ballot.

The Judiciary (Adopted 1962; revised 1987)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports a unified court system, adequately financed, with centralized administration and fiscal control achieved through:

1. Selection of judges of the higher courts by a method similar to the American Bar Association Plan which proposes that judges be appointed by the governor from a screened list submitted from a non-partisan nominating commission and be subject, at intervals, to election for retention or rejection.
2. Adequate personnel for the juvenile court.
3. An advisory judicial council.

Local Government (Adopted 1969; revised 2000)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports home rule for municipalities.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports a combined form of city/county government.

Apportionment and Redistricting (Adopted 2009)

LWVNM supports a redistricting process and standards that provide the people with a meaningful choice in electing their representatives and facilitate holding government accountable.

The criteria for preparing redistricting maps should require that districts meet all Federal criteria including equal population and the provisions of the Voting Rights Act. In addition, it is important that districts:

- be contiguous
- be reasonably compact, in terms of travel time from one part of the district to another
- avoid crossing geographic barriers to travel, such as mountain ranges

- minimize the partition of major jurisdictions (counties, municipalities) to the extent possible
- not intentionally favor any political party.

The League supports having an independent commission or other independent group develop redistricting plans meeting these criteria to be considered by the Legislature.

The public must have access to all information used in the redistricting process on a timely basis, and have the opportunity to comment and be heard on the proposed redistricting processes, criteria, and results.

Term Limitations (Adopted 1992; revised 1995)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico opposes term limitations for our state legislators.

State Personnel (Adopted 1954; revised 1983)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports a merit system of selection, retention, promotion and dismissal of personnel in state government.

Election Procedures (Original position 1969; extensively revised 1999; revised 2001, 2007)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports:

1. protection of the right of every citizen to vote;
2. procedures to guarantee the integrity of all statutory methods of voting in New Mexico;
3. funding to meet the requirements of the law and to serve the needs of the voters to ensure that elections are conducted accurately, fairly, and efficiently;
4. a centralized voter registration and election management system;
5. statewide uniformity in early voting for all elections;
6. an all-inclusive system of voting that allows all registered voters to participate in the primary election;
7. more direct citizen involvement in the candidate selection process for special elections to fill a vacancy in the US House of Representatives;
8. amending the State Constitution to allow run-off elections in the case of non-partisan elections.
9. consolidation of elections in New Mexico.

State Finance (Adopted 1971; revised 1975, 1983, 1989)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that a fair tax must be:

- equitable, taking into consideration relevant differences between persons, such as their annual income

- certain, not arbitrary
- convenient with respect to timing and manner of payment
- economical to collect
- adequate to finance the essentials of government.

The tax system in New Mexico should be progressive.

In evaluating the average burden of taxation within the state, taxes should be compared with income of New Mexico residents; in comparing the burden of taxation in New Mexico with the burden imposed by other states, state and local taxes should be combined.

Tax credits and/or deductions should be evaluated based on promotion of equity and the efficiency with which they achieve their purpose.

Tax credits may be a means of providing relief from the regressive nature of the sales and property tax.

Campaign Finance and Ethics (Adopted 1998; revised 1999, 2002, 2007)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that methods of financing political campaigns and public offices should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, maximize fiscal accountability and transparency, and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports legislative compensation that is fair and reasonable, recognizing that there is a cost to government and that the cost should be paid by the taxpayers of New Mexico.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports a fair, equitable and reasonable combination of public/private funding of campaigns for New Mexico state elective offices. Participation in the public/private financing should be voluntary. Participants should agree to voluntary spending limits. The legislation should provide for a source of revenue to fund the program.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports limits on gifts and contributions to candidates for elected offices and to the holders of elected and appointed offices.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports firm and consistent enforcement of campaign finance, gift and contribution reporting laws with significant penalties for non-compliance and wide public dissemination of reports.

An independent office or commission should have the authority to oversee campaign finance and gift laws as well as other ethics rules and lobbying laws, to receive allegations and complaints, to conduct investigations and to present cases to the appropriate enforcement agencies.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources (Adopted 1976, revised 1987)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that state government should accept a major responsibility in addressing the societal problems associated with resource development in the state. We believe that the state is the most effective level of government to attack these problems. The state should make planning expertise available to the local communities and work with them in identifying problems and choosing solutions. Where rapid development makes the cost of facilities prohibitive for local communities, there should be a state mechanism for providing necessary financial assistance. Coordination of national, regional, state and local government efforts, with effective citizen participation is necessary.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports the principle that environmental and social costs of resource development should be borne by the ultimate consumer. However, sharply higher prices as a result of covering environmental and social costs should be coupled with a mechanism to keep those costs from bearing unduly on any one segment of the population.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports a strong state resource conservation policy. The state should provide leadership, set a public example in its operations, develop and enforce regulations promoting conservation, and actively educate its citizens.

The protection of ground and surface water from contamination and the control and reduction in volume of hazardous, toxic and radioactive substances before they reach the land, air or water should be major parts of resource conservation policy. The state should not be prevented from having stricter control standards than those of the federal government. Public Health and well being should rank as the highest priority. The use of alternate energy sources should be encouraged.

Water (Adopted 2010)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that consumptive use of water in New Mexico must be in balance with renewable supply. Healthy ecosystems naturally perform services that benefit both people and nature, such as cleaning water, reducing floods, and creating fish and wildlife habitat. To secure the benefits of functioning ecosystems and to conserve New Mexico's biodiversity, sufficient water must be budgeted for environmental flows. The creation and adherence to comprehensive water budgets is essential to preserve public lands, water, and open space, and to ensure that there will be enough water for future generations of New Mexicans. The state, water regions, and local governments must

1. monitor and measure all water resources and uses, and publish this information;
2. use a public process to create and follow water budgets;
3. educate citizens on their responsibilities as well as their rights;
4. promote strategies to reduce demand;
5. minimize water contamination in order to promote the health and safety of all life;

6. preserve and restore rivers and watersheds.

Conservation of water and efficiency of use must be encouraged to enable New Mexico to meet its interstate compact obligations, to help balance use with supply, to relieve stress on the physical system, and to reduce net depletion.

Regional Water Planning

The League supports continued funding for regional planning. Using a public process, regional planning should

1. gather and publish data on supply and demand, and provide regular updates;
2. create a balanced water budget;
3. identify critical and emerging issues.

Local land use plans should be required to be consistent with applicable regional water plans.

The public welfare statements of a regional water plan should be considered by the State Engineer when reviewing applications for transfer of water rights.

Land Use and Water

Land use and development must be tied to water availability. To encourage this:

1. Compliance with water availability determinations by the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) under the Subdivision Act should be mandatory.
2. Review of subdivision applications pursuant to the Subdivision Act should be expanded to encompass all divisions of land.
3. Long-term cumulative impacts as well as short-term water requirements of development should be taken into consideration by the local permitting authority.
4. The applicant must be required to acquire water rights before development can proceed.
5. The impact of any transfer of water rights on the area of origin must be assessed.
6. The permitting authority should evaluate the impact of proposed developments on "public welfare" as defined by the applicable regional water plan and be able to demonstrate that the proposed development is consistent with the plan.
7. New residential and commercial developments should be water-efficient.
8. Growth should not be permitted where water is not available.

Local zoning and subdivision statutes should be updated. State and local governments should collaborate in addressing the problem of antiquated subdivisions in order to facilitate planning and to make the water budget process meaningful.

Role of Government

State government and the legal process must work to reconcile the many claims on New Mexico water in a manner that is open and as fair as possible. Among other considerations:

1. Communal as well as private interests must be respected in applying water law;

2. Maintenance of in-stream flow and general ecological health must be recognized as a “beneficial use” of water.

The Office of the State Engineer should be adequately funded to execute its functions. In addition:

1. The OSE must be given more authority to regulate domestic well permits. Improved regulation and monitoring of domestic wells and septic systems is essential to protect groundwater supplies and should be adequately funded.
2. The effort to gather data must be coordinated and adequately funded by the state, which should establish consistent protocols, accounting methods, and terminology.
3. The state should also help implement the regional water plans and provide coordination among planning activities at the different levels of government and across river basins.

Government should support research on water-related issues including

1. methods to manage and store water that lose less to evaporation,
2. best agricultural practices that optimize the use of water for both farmers and downstream users, while sustaining the natural flow;
3. urban systems that maximize water re-use;
4. health of the state’s rivers and watersheds.

Governments at every level must educate citizens by developing and disseminating data about water resources. Local governments must promulgate and enforce regulations promoting conservation, including positive incentives and rate structures.

SOCIAL POLICY

Child Care (Adopted 1978; revised 1983, 2003)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes there should be an adequate supply of good quality child care throughout New Mexico, both in child care centers and in family day care homes, to be implemented by:

1. Fiscally responsible planning and use of private, industrial and government funds;
2. Appropriate licensing requirements and supervisory procedures;
3. Support services for parents;
4. Efforts to make quality child care available to all who need such services;
5. Programs to meet the before and after school needs of school-age children.

Juvenile Concerns (Adopted 1977; revised 1978, 1979, 1985, 1993, 1995, 2003)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that our state has no resource of greater importance or value than its children. Programs, personnel and facilities that promote and encourage the child's fullest development must be a high priority within the private sector as well as in city, county and state governments.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that social and economic concerns and juvenile justice must be interconnected for the fair and equitable treatment of all children.

The League of Women Voters supports the development of an integrated plan for the continuum of services, available to all children and their families. The programs in the continuum should include, but not be limited to: prevention, intervention, family support, education, physical, emotional, and social well being, substitute care, and juvenile justice programs. The programs and associated services in the continuum should be community-based wherever feasible.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports the establishment of sound program standards for all facilities serving children and youth. e.g. day care, foster care, follow-up services, residential care and reintegration centers and the development of clear professional guidelines for all staff members of such programs. Programs should include but not be restricted to:

Physical and emotional health and well-being

- Crisis intervention services available locally
- Community diagnostic and/or evaluation procedures
- Removal of behavioral health from managed care and return of "fee for service"
- Inclusion of group homes, residential treatment centers, foster and therapeutic foster homes.

Substitute Care

- Carefully supervised crisis shelter care that would separate neglected and abused children from juvenile delinquents.

Family Support

- Community based programs for intervention and diversion. Services should include family, individual and group counseling and therapy, youth advocacy and referrals
- Parenting education
- Family crisis and domestic relations intervention.

Juvenile Justice

- Trained and qualified judges, police, probation personnel, lawyers, providers, appointed advocates and others in the juvenile justice system who work with children, thus promoting full and complete attention to the unique needs of each child
- Secure residential treatment facilities to meet the identified needs
- Development and support of alternatives to incarceration through community-based programs with emphasis on diversion and reintegration separate from institutional care
- Due process and legal representation at all stages of the child's contact within the law
- Provision of legal and safe detention accommodations for alleged and adjudicated delinquents who are in custody

- Monitoring of substitute care through Citizens Review Boards and Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Community forensic diagnostic and/or evaluation services
- Education provided for all youth within the juvenile justice system.
- The League supports legislation making criminal sexual penetration of a child thirteen to eighteen years of age a felony when the perpetrator is in a position of authority over the child. (Adopted 2001)

Health Care (Adopted 1991; revised 1993, 2005, 2007)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports a health care system that provides a comprehensive level of health care for New Mexico residents and recognizes the need for efficient management of health care costs. (Revised and adopted 2005.)

The LWVNM believes that any health system implemented should have the following:

Quality health coverage for all New Mexicans. Every New Mexican should have full health care coverage, a benefit package that is at least equal to the best plan offered to state employees, and access to the services covered. Participation should be mandatory. Pre-existing conditions should not be excluded from coverage.

Effective cost management. Cost management should increase the health care benefits that accrue to patients from any given level of spending.

Improvement of health care quality and safety. A comprehensive effort to improve the quality and safety of health care in New Mexico should be launched and sustained, with dramatically increased public funding.

Equitable funding. Reform should seek to reduce or eliminate cost-shifting across categories of insurance programs and payers, both public and private, and to make the distribution of financial burdens more equitable.

Simplified administration. Reform should include the development of standardized forms, minimization of complicated co-pays/deductibles, and assurances of timely payment to providers. (Adopted 2007.)

Every New Mexico resident should have a comprehensive level of health care. The League favors a national health insurance plan, but until one is in place, the League supports expansion of state and federal plans. (Adopted 1991; revised 2005.)

Drug Policy (Revised and adopted 2007)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports:

- Drug court programs;
- Treatment for all persons with drug addiction; and
- Syringe exchange programs in the State of New Mexico.

These programs should be prudently and appropriately funded. (Adopted 2002, revised 2003, 2007.)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that the serious problem of driving while intoxicated (DWI) demands legislative programs. The League supports:

- strong and equitable penalties for all offenders - including first offenders;
- strict and prompt enforcement;
- rehabilitation programs;
- public education programs;
- close cooperation between tribal, local and state officials; and
- adequate funding for enforcement, rehabilitation and education programs. (Adopted 1984.)

Education (Adopted 1987; revised 1995, 2009)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports:

- educational programs that help ensure for all students optimal prospects for success throughout life;
- measures to improve the preparation, recruitment, professional development, and retention of quality educators;
- the involvement by members of the community in efforts to improve public education at all levels; and
- the use of health and social service teams in the schools to identify and work with at-risk children and their parents or caregivers, with referrals to appropriate community agencies when necessary.

With reference to educational programs, LWVNM supports a system of public education that prepares students to function within a changing interdependent society. Specific goals include:

- Develop to each student's highest potential the mastery of knowledge and skills needed for success in adult life, along with a broad understanding and appreciation of past history and prospects for the future;
- Cultivate each student's capacity to solve problems and make decisions;
- Provide opportunities for all students to develop their aesthetic awareness and creative abilities;
- Foster an awareness of the rights and privileges of membership in a democratic society, and acceptance of the responsibilities involved;
- Foster an understanding of basic economic principles and the need to manage resources for the benefit of both present and future generations;
- Provide the tools to make wise vocational choices, as well as an understanding of the importance of each individual's work in the local, national, and world economies;
- Contribute to establishing healthy lifestyles through promotion use of practices that lead to physical, mental and emotional well-being;

- Enhance the sense of community within the school, as a microcosm of the larger society, through standards of conduct that reflect a concern for the opinions, values, aspirations, and well-being of all.

Public School Finance (Adopted 1973; revised 1983, 1993, 2002, 2007)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports the continued use of a broadly based distribution formula to take into consideration differences in student need, teacher experience and qualification, the number of schools and students in a district, level of education, capital outlay and transportation. (1973)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports the goals of the New Mexico Funding Formula as an effort to achieve equality and as an attempt to provide fair funding for every child, based on need, regardless of location. There should be periodic review and modifications to assure that the formula is faithful to its original intention. (1993)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that local school districts should control the distribution of funds from the state. (Adopted 1973; Revised 1983, 1993, 2002)

Economic Development (Adopted 2003)

The League of Women Voters New Mexico supports economic development with a focus on:

- economic growth more than population growth;
- good jobs with good wages;
- quality of life;
- consistency with protection of the environment and natural resources, particularly water; and
- capitalizing on what is already here, such as existing businesses, technologies, and people (e.g. creativity).

The League of Women Voters New Mexico believes that the state should have a strong leadership role in planning, implementing, and funding economic development. This role should include:

- supporting/assisting state regions in developing their own unique plans;
- developing an excellent educational system;
- expanding the use within the state of the capabilities of the universities and the labs; and
- providing centralized expertise for specialized areas such as technology commercialization, international trade, intellectual property, and regulatory approvals.

Death Penalty (Adopted 2006)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports the repeal of the death penalty and the institution of a sentence of life in prison without parole as an alternative.

Pending repeal, the LWVNM supports the implementation of the recommendations in the Final Report of the State Bar of New Mexico Task Force to Study the Administration of the Death Penalty in New Mexico (January 2004) including

- adequate defense funding for capital cases;
- a comprehensive proportionality study, including the development of a complete database of homicide prosecutions in New Mexico;
- higher standards for defense counsel at all stages of the proceedings;
- allowing opponents of the death penalty to serve on the jury for the first trial (to determine guilt or innocence) in a capital case.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability (Adopted 2007)

The LWVNM believes that potential impacts on sustainability should be considered in formulating new positions and in advocating using current positions. Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the current generation without impairing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.