

LWVLA Sustainability Unit Meeting August 28, 2006

Eight League members attended the unit meeting. They began by filling out a questionnaire and then discussing the answers. Responses to the first question indicated an optimistic versus a pessimistic perspective. Will we change course before it's too late? The second question asked what approach would be most effective in making society more sustainable. One answer was that we need to get rid of the GDP. How long has it been around?

Natural Resources and Economic Development

Should development be regulated to ensure that the biophysical limits of the local resource base are not exceeded...? There was a consensus in favor of regulation. To achieve that goal, the LWV would need to lobby the legislature.

Governance

Do LWV members believe that active, educated citizen participation in a democratically organized system of governance is essential for sustainability? The group felt that it is important to educate the masses in order to create a counter-balancing force to oppose the power of money (big business) in government.

The group felt that the League should take a position on issues related to corporate responsibility.

Introduction

Do we need a new position? Perhaps it would be better to call it a principle. A clear definition is essential because the word "sustainability" has so many meanings. The group felt that the definition in the first sentence should end "to meet environmental, economic, and social needs." This principle should be the overarching ethic that will inform all the League positions. The principle should be set forth with an explanation as is done in Impact on Issues. It's important to define or describe what we mean by sustainability so that it can't be hijacked.

It was suggested that the Los Alamos position and history could be helpful in developing the definition.

There was consensus in favor of more widespread use of the precautionary principle, but the group altered the wording, replacing "suspicion" with "possibility" and deleting the word "scientific".

Social Policies

The role of education is to help people understand the issues. It's important to teach children to think creatively.

Health care should be omitted from the sustainability principle.

The core economy needs to be included in the League's social policies.

What about population control?

Conclusion

The Los Alamos members agreed that LWVNM should adopt a principle of sustainability that would apply to all of its positions.

Report prepared by Barbara Calef

Appendix: LWVLA Sustainability Position (revised 2004)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos endorses the concept of a sustainable society as a preamble for all of its current and new positions. A sustainable society may be defined as one in which social and economic justice prevail and that preserves and respects its interdependence with the natural world. It is one that satisfies its own needs without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations. Communities everywhere would be healthy, safe, caring, and productive places where individuals could be assured of enough pure water, clean air, fertile soil, and sufficient sources of renewable energy to provide for their physical needs. Scarce resources would be equitably distributed so that conflicts over them would be minimized. Each individual would live in dignity with a livable wage. And civil discourse would show that individuals respect one another.