

DOES LWVNM NEED A NEW STATE POSITION ON SUSTAINABILITY?

LWVLA plans to propose a state study of sustainability with the goal of adopting a position for LWVNM during the 2005-2007 program year. Because of the complexity of the subject, we plan to publish a series of articles in La Palabra during 2005 to introduce the issues. We hope to follow up with presentations to the local Leagues in 2005-2006 in order to develop the basis for a state position.

To some extent the concept of “sustainability” is already present in LWVUS and LWVNM positions. For example, the national position on Natural Resources states that resources “should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.” The subsection “Further Guidelines and Criteria” includes many sustainable concepts, such as “promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship” and “support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.” The state position on Natural Resources strongly supports resource conservation.

However, it has become clear that the solutions suggested by these existing Natural Resource positions do not address all aspects of sustainability. We need to consider not only the growing resource shortages, that is, the biophysical limitations, of the planet but also the systemic economic, political and social structures that are making it difficult for humanity to address the problems that it faces. Certainly technology has an important role to play: we must not merely recycle and reuse but learn to design so that there is little or no waste; we must tailor industry and transportation to require no more energy than can be sustainably supplied by the sun. But we believe that technological solutions will not be enough, as an economic system that relies on future growth to lift billions out of poverty collides with an increasingly stressed biosphere.

We share the premise of the League that such major problems can be solved only by democratically organized, informed citizens. We believe that the concept of sustainability must inform the League’s positions on Government, Social Policy and International Relations as well as Natural Resources. And because unsustainable societies are likely to become undemocratic, we believe that the League should be taking positive leadership on these difficult issues.

Each of the articles that we are preparing for La Palabra will include a few questions. If you have thoughts on these or related questions, we would very much like to hear from you. Please send your ideas to Kathy Campbell at ksmithcamp@cybermesa.com or 225 Rim Road, Los Alamos, NM 87544. They will be of great help to us as we prepare a position for study and possible adoption by LWVNM. Here are some questions to begin with:

Do you agree that a notion of sustainability should inform all League positions? Why or why not? Do you think that the League needs a stronger position in this area or do you find the existing positions [national and state] sufficient? Are there worthy legislative initiatives that the state League is currently unable to support for lack of sufficient positions in this area?