



Positions (05/17/2015)

SUSTAINABILITY (Adopted 2007)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico 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.

GOVERNMENT

Apportionment and Redistricting (Adopted 2009; revised 2013)

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.

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.

Campaign Finance and Ethics (Adopted 1993; 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.

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.

Election Procedures (Adopted 1969; 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.

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.

Judiciary (Adopted 1962; revised 1987, 2015)

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 all courts.

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.

Public Regulation Commission (Adopted 2012; revised 2013)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports the following with respect to the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) and the entity regulating insurance:

1. PRC candidates should be evaluated on the basis of qualifications by a broad-based nonpartisan process.
2. Candidates for the PRC should have education and/or appropriate professional experience in a related field or in consumer advocacy. There should also be mandated, ongoing professional training after election.
3. The PRC should be funded by assessments on the industries that it regulates and those funds should be sequestered from the general fund.
3. The legislature should approve a budget sufficient to enable the PRC to carry out its allotted duties successfully.
4. Insurance and Utilities should be regulated by separate agencies.
5. The laws forbidding *ex parte* communications between Commissioners and those who are interested parties in cases before the PRC should be very strong, and penalties for violating these laws also should be strengthened.
6. The PRC should have an inspector general charged with reviewing practices for handling incoming payments properly, conducting internal audits of other functions, and pursuing such other investigations as are deemed necessary.
7. The PRC Commissioners and advisory staff should be prohibited from working in a business regulated by the PRC for at least 1 year after they complete their tenure at the PRC.
8. Consumer interests should have strong representation when the PRC is making policy decisions and setting rates.

State Finance (Adopted 1971; revised 1975, 1983, 1989, 2014)

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

1. equitable, taking into consideration relevant differences between persons, such as their annual income
2. certain, not arbitrary
3. convenient with respect to timing and manner of payment
4. economical to collect

5. adequate to finance the essentials of government.

The tax system in New Mexico should be progressive. LWVNM may support taxes that are regressive if it is determined that the tax will achieve a socially desirable objective.

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.

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.

Term Limits (Adopted 1992; revised 1995)

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

Transparency in State and Local Governments (Adopted 2011)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) expects all state and local governments, executive and legislative, to follow the requirements of the New Mexico Open Meetings Act (OMA) and Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA).

LWVNM also recommends that all state and local governments, executive and legislative, adopt the following policies and practices regarding open meetings and public records, over and above what is legally required by the OMA and the IPRA, within reasonable budget constraints:

A. Open Meetings

1. Maintain a comprehensive list of all meetings that are open to the public, along with their time, place, and agenda. With the exception of emergency meetings, announce public meetings at least one week in advance, using display ads in standard public media and on the government web site. To the extent that is practical, have all written materials that will be used in a public meeting available a week in advance, preferably on-line, or let the public know where and how such materials can be obtained.
2. Broadcast as many public meetings as possible, in both real-time and an archived format, preferably on-line.
3. Allow time and access for public input on important issues.
4. Develop and publish a policy concerning public attendance and participation at meetings of government bodies that are not covered by the OMA.
5. Make draft minutes of public meetings available to the public as soon as they are filed with the clerk or other appropriate official.

6. In order to avoid the possibility or the perception that executive sessions may be used to keep from informing the public on certain issues, the League recommends the following policies on executive sessions:
 - a. Hold meetings in executive session only when absolutely necessary, even though the OMA may allow otherwise.
 - b. Include an explanation of the purpose of the executive session in the meeting agenda.
 - c. Keep a public record of all attendees at executive sessions and make that information public when the public body reconvenes after executive session.
 - d. On important matters of wide public interest that have been discussed in executive session, publish a draft motion based on what was discussed in executive session and allow public input on it at a public meeting before a vote is taken.

B. Inspection of Public Records

1. Create an inspection of public records policy and procedure whose goal is to help the public obtain the maximum amount of information they may want to discover about their government and do so in a timely and cost-effective manner.
2. Publish a price list for copying different types of public records.
3. Develop a policy regarding the production and cost of spreadsheets, lists, and other reports which may not already exist as public documents but whose data exist within government files and in which there is a public interest.
4. Use the government website as a repository of all information that is most likely to be needed by the public, including (but not limited to) open meetings and public records policies, meeting lists, proposed agendas, minutes, contents of meeting packets, frequently requested documents, contact information for government employees, resolutions and ordinances, personnel and procurement policies, and the location and mission of various departments and divisions.
5. Use the government website as a repository for searchable budget and financial records, including operating budgets, expenditures over a specified amount, checks/warrants and any other budget and financial information made available to the governing body. These data should be in a non-proprietary format that maximizes the public's ability to download and analyze data.
6. Ensure that the government website is easy to use and search, that the information posted there is timely and up-to-date, and that it provides for interactive processes, such as requests for public records, whenever feasible.

LWVNM recommends that state and local governments go beyond open meetings and inspection of public records in their efforts toward open, accessible governance. We especially recommend these practices:

- A. State and local governments' resolutions, ordinances, or published policies should cover ethics and conflict of interest, providing sanctions for violations.
- B. Managers responsible for transparency should be trained and evaluated according to relevant statutes, policies, resolutions and ordinances. Elected officials should receive training on statutes and other mandates applicable to them.
- C. State and local governments should encourage input and listen to their constituents. They should make it easy for constituents to comment on local issues, and as budgets allow they should periodically assess the needs, desires, and satisfaction of their constituents. They should respond to constituents' recommendations by changing policies and practices or providing explanations when they reject such input.

- D. State and local governments should provide timely and complete information to their constituents on current topics.
- E. State and local governments should provide up-to-date, easy-to-find information about their office locations, building directories, organization charts, and contact information for managers of key functions.

NATURAL RESOURCES (Adopted 1976; revised 1987, 2015)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that government should promote and ensure responsible stewardship of our natural, human, and cultural resources, particularly in the face of growth and development. An essential prerequisite for protecting our resources is to require comprehensive analysis of the environmental and fiscal impacts of applications before issuing a development permit.

Environmental Justice

The League believes that government must conduct its programs, policies, and activities in a manner that promotes equity and affords fair treatment, accessibility, and protection for all residents, regardless of race, age, culture, income, or geographic location.

Land Use

The League finds that the responsible management of our land is critically important to ensure the long-term health and well-being of all New Mexicans, to protect the resilience of our urban and rural communities, and to preserve habitats and natural landscapes for the continued viability of all species.

The League further notes that land use is inextricably linked with other important issues such as water, energy, food, transportation, air quality, and climate change. Strategic planning at the local, regional, and state levels must not consider land use in isolation. Government subsidies for development should only be approved when the benefit to society justifies the full cost and outweighs any detriment to the natural environment.

The League believes that, as the responsible steward of our land use resources, state government should

1. revise land use planning, zoning, and subdivision statutes to better protect our natural resources;
2. provide oversight, technical assistance, and funding to ensure that all communities are able to comply with comprehensive planning requirements;
3. require comprehensive planning by local governments that is
 - i. updated on a regular basis;
 - ii. consistent with regional water plans;
 - iii. implemented by zoning and subdivision ordinances;
4. ensure coordination among key state agencies responsible for stewardship of our state's resources;
5. improve communication and coordination between Native American communities and federal, state, and local governments in New Mexico;
6. encourage local communities to enact measures to conserve energy, integrate transportation planning, consider availability of water and other resources;
7. protect the quality of the environment for people of all economic levels;
8. preserve open space and natural habitat for wildlife by identifying and regulating areas of critical concern including fragile areas, wildlife corridors, historic areas, riparian habitats, and natural hazard lands.

Transparency and public participation in decision-making must be part of the process at all levels of government.

A substantial portion of the land in New Mexico is controlled by the State Land Office (SLO). The LWVNM believes that the SLO should practice transparency and accountability in its actions and should include local communities in decision-making. The State Legislature should ensure that the State Land Commissioner has the support needed to maximize profits and minimize administrative costs, while protecting the environment and preserving the long-term value of the land.

Transportation

The League believes it is important to integrate transportation into land use planning. To reduce vehicle miles traveled, it is essential to encourage alternatives to the single occupant vehicle. Thus, the League supports government decisions to

1. improve public access to integrated mass transit systems, especially to link workplace and neighborhood destinations;
2. improve public access to alternative forms of transportation such as cycling and walking.

The League calls for government agencies responsible for transportation planning to reach out to the general public to improve public participation in transportation-related decisions. All future road projects should take into account the needs of all people.

Agriculture

LWVNM recognizes the vital contribution that New Mexico farmers and ranchers make to our health and welfare by supplying us with food and promoting a vibrant economy for the state. LWVNM urges the state to work with the industry to promote research and education about more sustainable agricultural practices. As stewards of our natural and human resources, we must preserve healthy local ecosystems for future generations.

The LWVNM urges the State of New Mexico to

1. provide training programs on sustainable farming and ranching practices;
2. provide assistance to institutions of higher learning within the state to integrate sustainable agricultural practices into their curriculum;
3. regulate the management of livestock and crops to prevent contamination of soil, air, and water;
4. encourage farmers and ranchers to cooperate with wildlife managers to actively preserve and restore riparian habitat and natural stream flows;
5. provide more funding for the Cooperative Extension Service for the support of local agriculture.

Air Quality

The League supports programs that protect clean air. Effective air pollution controls should be implemented for both stationary and mobile sources of emissions.

The New Mexico Environment Department is the chief regulatory agency responsible for air quality protection in the state. It is important that the public has access to the regulation development process and

that the subsequent permitting and enforcement ensure that air quality is protected from deterioration. Permitting and enforcement must be performed in a transparent manner.

Waste Management

The League supports policies that

1. reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of waste materials;
2. ensure safe treatment, transportation, storage and disposal of materials that cannot be re-used or recycled in order to protect public health and natural resources;
3. involve state and local governments and citizens in the consideration of proposals for treatment, storage, disposal and transportation of materials;
4. ensure that the full cost of remediation is borne by those who cause the pollution.

Climate Change

The scientific evidence is clear that our climate is changing and that human activities resulting in the emission of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases are significant factors in the heating of the planet. The League supports policies and incentives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting greater energy efficiency; by developing clean, renewable energy sources; and by encouraging further research on alternatives to the combustion of fossil fuels for energy. Industries in New Mexico should be required to pursue carbon reduction strategies. The League also believes that government should educate the public about how to reduce individual carbon footprints and should offer incentives to do so.

Energy and Mining

The League supports

1. environmentally sound resource extraction, power production and transmission;
2. strong measures to promote conservation of energy and water;
3. rigorous regulation and enforcement to prevent mining and drilling activities from contaminating surface or ground water or the surrounding landscape;
4. taxes on resource extraction and energy development in order to assist communities with associated infrastructure costs;
5. adequate bonding or other financial guarantees for mining and drilling activities to fund clean-up operations in the event of abandonment by companies.

Water Quality

The League supports stringent regulations to protect ground and surface water quality from pollution that can impact human health as well as the natural flora and fauna. Such regulations must be strictly enforced.

Water Supply (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

Affordable Housing (Adopted 2013)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports current and future efforts to increase the availability of safe, decent, and affordable housing for moderate and low income households through the following actions.

1. Increase housing options for households in New Mexico, including but not limited to seniors, the disabled, and first-time homebuyers.
2. Promote a variety of housing styles and types for rent and for purchase that are integrated within communities.
3. Support strategies including public and private partnerships and grants, developmental agreements, rehabilitation, fee waivers, density bonuses, and an affordable housing trust fund and land bank.
4. Support policies that link transportation, land use, and affordable housing.

Alcohol (Adopted 2014)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that alcohol abuse is a public health issue and can be most effectively approached as such.

To address the impact of alcohol abuse, the League supports the following:

- raising taxes on the sale of alcohol. Research has shown increasing taxes is the single most effective way to reduce death, harm, and costs associated with alcohol abuse.
- dedicating all funds raised by increasing taxes on alcohol to treatment and prevention programs. No taxes on alcohol should be distributed to the New Mexico General fund.
- giving a high priority to screening and treatment solutions for alcohol abuse.
- consolidating prevention programs to make better use of limited resources.
- increasing the emphasis on community after-school services and supervision programs for minors.
- enacting laws making consumption of alcohol by minors illegal except under the supervision of their parents.

The League's priorities for taking action to reduce alcohol abuse are

1. establishing education and prevention programs, especially for minors.
2. developing and funding well-organized, efficient, and effective treatment programs with dedicated revenue streams.
3. increasing parental responsibility by means of education and social responsibility laws.

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.

Children and Families (Adopted 1977; Revised 1978, 1979, 1985, 1993, 1995, 2003, 2015)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that our state has no resource of greater importance 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, economic and legal concerns must be interconnected for the fair and equitable treatment of all children.

The League of Women Voters supports a continuum of services that is available to all children and their families.

The programs in the continuum should include, but not be limited to: prevention; intervention, family support, education, enhancement of 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 rigorous standards for all facilities serving children and youth and the development of clear professional guidelines for all staff members. 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

Substitute Care (out of home care)

- Carefully supervised crisis shelter care that would separate neglected and abused children from juvenile offenders.
- Provision of group homes, residential treatment centers, foster and therapeutic foster homes

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.
- Local forensic diagnostic and/or evaluation services.
- Treatment programs to meet identified needs.
- Development and support of alternatives to incarceration through community-based programs with emphasis on diversion and reintegration separate from correctional facilities.
- Due process and legal representation at all stages of the child's contact with the law.
- Provision of legal and safe detention accommodations for all juveniles in custody.
- Monitoring of substitute care through Citizens Review Boards and Court Appointed Special Advocates.
- Education provided for all youth in the juvenile justice system.

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.

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

1. adequate defense funding for capital cases;
2. a comprehensive proportionality study, including the development of a complete database of homicide prosecutions in New Mexico;
3. higher standards for defense counsel at all stages of the proceedings;

4. allowing opponents of the death penalty to serve on the jury for the first trial (to determine guilt or innocence) in a capital case.

Drug Policy (Adopted 1984; revised 2002, 2003, 2007, 2015)

The term “drug” is meant to include all addictive drugs, including alcohol. The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports

1. Drug court programs;
2. Treatment for all persons with drug addiction;
3. Syringe exchange programs in the State of New Mexico;
4. Rehabilitation programs;
5. Public education programs;
6. Close cooperation between tribal, local and state officials; and
7. Adequate funding for enforcement, rehabilitation and education programs. These programs should be prudently and appropriately funded.

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

Economic Development (Adopted 2003)

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

1. economic growth more than population growth;
2. good jobs with good wages;
3. quality of life;
4. consistency with protection of the environment and natural resources, particularly water; and
5. 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

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

Education (Adopted 1987; revised 1995, 2009, 2015)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) believes that education is the cornerstone for perpetuating a strong and viable democracy. The public education system should impart to all students an understanding of the nature of democracy and the responsibilities of citizenship, the ability to think critically, and the skills necessary to continue to learn and function as adults in a complex society.

The League supports public schools as the primary method of educating students. The League opposes the presence of private, for-profit companies in the governance, management and provision of public education.

LWVNM supports the following strategies to ensure the greatest possible academic success for all students:

School System Practices for Student Success:

1. Use the Common Core State Standards to provide a framework for knowledge and academic skills for all students, accompanied by flexibility for local school systems to determine how this body of knowledge and skills is imparted to students.
2. 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.
3. Cultivate each student's capacity to solve problems and make decisions.
4. Provide opportunities for all students to develop their aesthetic awareness and creative abilities.
5. Foster an awareness of the rights and privileges of membership in a democratic society, and acceptance of the responsibilities involved.
6. Foster an understanding of basic economic principles and the need to manage resources for the benefit of both present and future generations.
7. 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.
8. Promote practices that lead to physical, mental and emotional well-being.
9. 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.
10. Develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students through experiential-based learning. Also, use technology for self-paced learning.
11. Maintain 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.

Community Involvement:

1. Collaborate across all sectors of the community to improve public education at all levels.
2. Seek business initiatives offering work schedules that support student attendance at school.
3. Create incentives to encourage students to develop career skills and graduate from high school.
4. Institute programs that increase involvement of parents of all socioeconomic groups in the education of their children at all grade levels.

Early Childhood Education:

Secure collaboration among a broad base of community organizations, social service agencies and the local school system to enhance the development of children from birth to age five to prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Evaluation of Teachers, Students and School Performance:

1. Student evaluation should focus on student academic progress rather than rigid standards of proficiency.

2. Student testing should be used for the purpose of enabling teachers to create timely teaching strategies for the best possible student academic achievement.
3. Implement measures to improve the preparation, recruitment, professional development, and retention of quality educators.
4. Teacher performance evaluations should demonstrate the teacher's in-depth knowledge in core academic subjects and pedagogy.
5. Teacher evaluations should be based on achievement of the goals in their performance evaluation plan, significant classroom observations, and some consideration of the overall student academic progress in the classroom.
6. Termination of teachers and principals should follow a due process procedure when they do not meet minimum standards.
7. Assessment of the school and teacher performance should demonstrate the overall quality of the education provided to the students and improvements in student academic growth as measured by multiple methods, not solely standardized tests.

Funding for Public Education (Adopted 1973; revised 1983, 1993, 2002, 2007), Revised and adopted by Board through concurrence, 2015)

1. A broadly based distribution formula should be used that takes 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.
2. Programs that foster children's language development, from birth to age 5, for success in kindergarten and beyond should be adequately funded.
3. The New Mexico Funding Formula should be used to achieve equality and 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.
4. Funding formulas should provide for a high quality education for all students and be consistently and fairly applied across the state.
5. Local school districts should control the funds distributed to them by the state.
6. The financial impact on traditional public schools must be evaluated before charters are granted or renewed.
7. Funding to state-chartered schools should minimize the amount allocated for-profit management and business operations with oversight provided by state-approved auditors.
8. All state and federal mandates should be funded so as not to place an undue burden on the local school system.

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. 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. (Revised and adopted 2005.)

The Judiciary (Adopted 1962; revised 1987, 2015)

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 all courts.

Living Wage (Adopted, 2015)

LWVNM believes that alleviating poverty is the shared responsibility of government, employers, individuals, and non-profit assistance organizations. All sectors should be involved in setting an adequate minimum wage or living wage. The living wage is the minimum required to avoid poverty without government assistance and subsidies. The living wage (gross income) should cover the costs of food, clothing, housing, energy, transportation, health care, K-12 education, child-care, taxes (income, Social Security), and supplemental expenses for work and school.

The LWVNM supports the passage by the state legislature of a minimum wage law tied to the cost of living and also supports the passage of minimum wage ordinances by local governments, if they perceive a need.

Mental Health (Adopted 2013)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) expects state and local governments to support an adequately funded mental health care system that provides comprehensive services to the acutely, chronically and seriously mentally ill of all ages; maintains optimal mental health services for all clients; places emphasis on meeting the needs of children; offers mental health services for the homeless; seeks additional funds for preventive services; implements a master plan to integrate services; raises awareness of critical unmet needs; and emphasizes case management.

LWVNM specifically supports

1. Adequately funded mental health care systems that
 - a. provide comprehensive services to the acutely, chronically and seriously mentally ill of all ages;
 - b. place emphasis on meeting the needs of children;
 - c. seek additional funds to provide preventive services;
 - d. offer mental health services for the homeless;
 - e. maintain optimum mental health services for all clients.
2. Implementation of a master plan that
 - a. ensures that there will be a network of integrated services, clearly defined and consistent with a community support model;
 - b. advocates an awareness of and concern about the critical unmet needs;
 - c. emphasizes case management that includes assistance with housing, financial entitlements, rehabilitative and vocational programs.
3. Centers for the seriously and chronically mentally ill apart from the county system.
4. Regulations that provide an adequate length of time for evaluation and treatment of involuntary holds.
5. Model mandatory outpatient care programs with adequate supervisory staff.