

ELECTION PROCESS

Nomination of Candidates

The goal of the primary process should be to select the best possible candidates for the political parties, with the greatest possible voter participation.

Candidates of political parties for the office of Governor and U.S. Senator should be selected in open primaries where voters do not publicly declare a party but can vote for the candidates of one party only.

- Primaries should be direct. A plurality vote is sufficient.
- To be nominated for the primary, each candidate for state or national office should be required to file a petition signed by a specific number of registered voters distributed geographically.
- A specific period for filing should be set, with a closing date which allows time for the certification of signatures and other administrative details necessary for the preparation of the ballot.

Voter Registration

Indiana should require registration to verify the identity and qualifications of voters, to prevent fraud, and to maintain accurate records.

Government at all levels, the political parties, other groups, and individual citizens should encourage citizens to register.

State and local government and the political parties carry primary responsibility for implementing registration procedures, and all citizens, the federal government, and nonpartisan political groups should be allowed to participate in voter registration.

Registration should be easy and accessible. State and local governments carry the responsibility for publicizing registration deadlines and procedures. They should

- have mail-in application forms readily and always available at public offices and libraries, as
- well as allow political parties and other organizations to distribute forms;
- ensure that the offices are conveniently located at a variety of public sites during hours
- suitable for the working public, and that the forms will always be accepted;
- publicize widely the dates for voter registration, where forms may be obtained and the office hours for these locations; and
- purge and maintain an accurate statewide voter database

As stated in the Constitution of the State of Indiana, registration should be open to citizens who

are at least eighteen years of age at Election Day and have resided in the precinct for thirty days before the election.

Poll Workers

To guarantee checks and balances at the polls, precinct officials should be selected by the two major parties working under equitable regulation insofar as possible.

To enhance the pool of applicants, poll workers should receive reasonable compensation, including for time spent in training.

Some workers at each polling place should be allowed to work shifts rather than the entire day.

Employers should regard poll service as an excused absence from regular work, like jury duty.

The League supports efforts to broaden the pool of potential poll workers by educating citizens about the need for workers, especially from diverse groups in our communities. Young voters and members of minorities and other underrepresented groups should be recruited. Qualified residents who are sixteen or seventeen years old should be permitted to serve under adequate supervision.

Training for poll workers should be standardized throughout the state. First-time workers and those assuming new positions should be trained in their new duties. Experienced workers should be trained in all changes in the laws and regulations and should be required to attend periodic review sessions.

Dissemination of Voting Information

Through various public media, election officials should provide adequate and timely information about registration procedures, lists of candidates on the ballot, polling places, and voting procedures.

Election Procedure

Voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.

To ensure uniform application of laws throughout the state and thereby assure each voter fair and equal treatment at the polls, the responsibility to interpret Indiana election laws should remain with the state. Also, the responsibility for evaluating and approving voting devices should remain with the state which will issue a list of voting systems certified by the State Election Commission.

The responsibility for the selection of voting devices should remain at the local level. In the approval and selection of voting devices, the most important factors must be secrecy of the vote, access for voters (including accessibility for voters who have special needs), protection against fraud, and accuracy of the vote count.

There must be assurances that qualified voters whose names are not on the poll list or who are challenged will be able to vote. There should be the following options for such voters:

- Provisional ballots, which must be verified and counted in a fair and timely fashion.
- Certificates of error, which ensure that votes will be counted at the polling place. A voter should be allowed to vote after a telephone confirmation that a certificate will be issued. The voter should not be required to wait until the certificate arrives at the polling place.

Absentee voting should be allowed by mail, or in person at designated sites. Where feasible, counties should have the option of having vote centers as an alternative to precinct voting places. In all cases, the integrity of the ballot must be assured.

Description of Election Day procedures should be simple, understandable, and available at each polling place both for the voters and for the poll workers (precinct election officials). Poll workers must be able to reach the election board before the polls open, during voting hours, and until their work is completed after the polls close.

Voters should have easy access to information specifying the precincts in which specific addresses are located. Official lists of write-in candidates should be posted at the polling places.

Whenever a change is made in voting devices or procedures, comprehensive retraining of election officials, which includes addressing the issues of voters with special needs, should be mandatory.

The period between the primary and the general election should be reduced in order to lower campaign costs and to help sustain voter interest. Sixty to ninety days is sufficient to conduct a statewide campaign.

Twelve hours is a sufficient amount of time for all citizens to vote at the polling sites. Each voter should be allowed adequate time to cast a ballot.

Laws on electioneering should be strictly enforced.

Election Recounts

The state should maintain uniform and equitable recount procedures for state and local offices. Local and state election officials should fully cooperate with federal officials in recounts involving U.S. senators, representatives, or the president.

Redistricting

An independent nonpartisan commission should determine voting districts in the state of Indiana. A commission should be constituted so as to preclude electoral benefit to any individual or political party.

Districts should be compact and contiguous. They should respect existing political and geographical boundaries, such as cities and counties.

The drawing of districts should consider factors such as ethnicity, language, socio-economic background and location. Political affiliation or past voting record should not be considered.

Incumbency should not be considered.

Within the parameters of the federal Voting Rights Act, population size should be one of several factors considered when drawing districts.

Transparency is of the utmost importance. All meetings of the commission should be public, and maps, records, transcripts and data should be available to the public. Adequate opportunities for public hearings should be provided, including review of the final plan.

The commission should provide written justification for the final district boundaries.

Restudied 2012-2013

Expanded and Adopted by LWVIN Board of Directors, July 2013

FISCAL AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

Local Government

LWVIN supports the following principles of local government:

Representative and participatory: LWVIN supports strategies that promote diversity of representation and civic participation, information that is complete, clearly presented and accessible; services that are accessible; and citizen input and review of all policy making.

Efficient and effective: LWVIN supports local government organization and processes that direct dollars to the improvement of services instead of excess administration. Intergovernmental cooperation should be an essential element of governmental processes.

Transparent, accessible and accountable: LWVIN supports local government that is transparent and with elected and appointed officials accessible to the public. Officials who make policy and levy taxes should be accountable to the voters. Officials who administer policy are accountable to the elected officials who appoint them.

Flexible: LWVIN supports choices for counties, cities, and towns in the ways they organize and administer their structures and functions within guidelines set by the state.

Fair and equitable: LWVIN supports fair and equitable processes and services.

Continuous improvement: LWVIN supports provisions for the continuous improvement of governmental processes including, but not limited to: technical assistance, qualifications for and training of personnel, standards, evaluation, reporting, data collection, and research.

Local Government Finance

Local government units should be allowed to use a mix of taxing options or alternatives, in addition to equitable property taxation, for financing local governmental operations.

There is a need for flexibility in funding services at the local level. Local government units should have the ability to choose the most appropriate remedy, as established by law.

Local government units depend on and need a program of state fiscal support including, but not limited to, distribution of taxes collected statewide as well as state general fund surpluses. State funds should be used to compensate local governments for taxes not paid on tax-exempt state property and for state-mandated local programs.

State government should enable a variety of local option income taxes that allow increases in local revenues for purposes other than property tax replacement. These taxes may be levied on both personal and/or corporate income. When a county adopts such a tax, it should apply to all income generated in that county, with no credits given to either residents or nonresidents.

The townships' annual financial and budget estimate reports each shall provide specific, uniform information that accounts for the costs of all functions, including administration, as well as for amounts in financial reserves.

Property Tax Exemption

State property tax exemptions, deductions, tax abatements and TIFs narrow the tax base of local governments, burden non-exempt properties and/or cause reductions in services offered by local governments. They should be granted fairly, equitably and sparingly. ("Tax abatements": taxes on new investment phased-in over a number of years; "TIF": if an area is designated a Tax Increment Finance district, property taxes generated from new development can be set aside and invested back in the area to promote development.)

Each county auditor should make available to the public the names, assessed values and purposes of organizations and businesses whose property is tax-exempt. The auditor should post property tax information on the county website.

Owners of tax-exempt properties should make payments in lieu of taxes for services provided them by government.

Property tax relief for persons should be based on economic need, should be given uniformly, and should be financed by the state.

Tax System

Support of a broad-based, equitable, efficiently administered tax system which provides adequate revenue for Indiana's budgetary needs.

Members of the League of Women Voters of Indiana believe a tax system should be broad-based, equitable, easily understood, and efficiently administered and should provide adequate revenue for Indiana's budgetary needs.

To achieve these goals, the League supports the following measures:

An individual income tax which is progressive for all income levels.

Graduated rates of income tax are progressive, proportionate to income, but Indiana's current flat rate for individuals is not. The League of Women Voters of Indiana supports progressivity because it helps to equalize the tax burden among those with different incomes, not putting a greater share proportionally on the poor. It builds into taxes the ability to pay.

Therefore, the League strongly advocates that the Indiana income tax should be made progressive, with the introduction of graduated rates. The league believes that individual income taxes should be restructured as soon as possible to this method of taxation.

The actual graduated rates should provide, at the least, the same total income to the state as current income taxes do.

The League of Women Voters continues to oppose any reduction in Indiana personal income tax revenue.

Assessment of all real property at frequent, regular intervals, at the same effective percentage, using adequately trained personnel and up-to-date procedures.

The League finds that, over and over, Indiana tax problems stem from inadequacies of administration, especially of assessment. The League urges state and local governments and legislative groups to work further to resolve these problems.

Because the League of Women Voters of Indiana prefers taxation based on income and the ability to-pay, the League favors changes in local property taxation in the direction of equity and fairness. The League favors the transfer of some responsibilities of government from the local to the state level, with consequent reduction in local property taxes and replacement of the funds from state revenues. The League supports full state financing of public welfare. It also favors relief on local property taxes by shifting responsibility for much of the financing of public education to the state; however, it also supports retention of some funding responsibility for education at the local level so that some degree of control of schools can be maintained at the local level.

The LWVIN strongly advocates replacing any lower local property tax collections with increased

collections from a state graduated income tax. The League takes the broad position that the mix of taxes used to fund all state and local government should be changed in favor of heavier reliance on a state graduated income tax.

The League favors the replacement of revenues lost from local property tax relief for businesses through an increase in state corporation income tax and other taxes on business. The LWVIN does not favor rescinding the Corporate Gross Receipts Tax. The League supports the elimination of the inventory tax, action requiring a constitutional amendment. Until such an amendment could be approved, the League favors reduction of the inventory tax and its replacement by other taxes on businesses.

Because of the possibility of substantial increases in residential taxes with a "market value" system of property assessment, the League supports a "circuit breaker" system in market value assessment, which will protect low-income taxpayers whose property has appreciated in value.

School Finance

The League of Women Voters of Indiana believes that public school funding should guarantee equal access to basic, high quality education for all Indiana children and recognition of State responsibility for attaining this goal. To achieve this goal, the League supports a foundation program for funding public elementary and secondary schools.

The League defines a foundation program as a state-regulated system (1) which provides for standard, basic, high quality education for all Indiana children regardless of their place of residence; (2) which is appropriate for each child's individual potential and circumstances; (3) which is financed by a mix of local and state funds; (4) and which provides fiscal equalization, i.e., a minimum local tax effort is required by state legislation, and state tax revenues provide sufficient additional funds to pay for the foundation program.

The foundation program should include:

Provisions for incentives to improve education.

Weights reflecting the added per pupil costs for equalizing educational opportunity for children who are economically disadvantaged, physically handicapped, or in other special circumstances.

Provision for additional costs resulting from special circumstances of the school corporation itself.

The total foundation program funding should be set at a level high enough to provide all funds needed for school corporations to pay for high quality education. This includes teachers' salaries which are competitive within the field.

After the foundation program has been set at a level high enough for a basic program and has been fully funded, the League supports other funding mechanisms which allow school corporations to provide for local needs and interests by additional limited local leeway funding.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana supports:

An over-all increase in the level of education funding of Indiana's public schools.

The concept of state taxes paying, on the average, three fourths of public school operating expenses (those costs other than construction costs, debt service, and transportation).

Transportation funded separately by a mix of state and local taxes. Complete funding of costs over the foundation level for state mandated programs.

Methods of public funding of schools which (1) are simple, predictable, and stable, allowing for efficient planning; (2) are flexible and responsive to local needs and/or choices; (3) and provide incentives for creative efforts among school corporations and innovative approaches to problems.

A method of public school funding which eliminates extreme variations in level of per pupil expenditures, allocating funding so that each child receives relatively equal support, with consideration given to area differences in cost of living.

If additional tax revenues are needed to supply the state's share of an adequate foundation program, the League favors use of the statewide income tax.

The League opposes the diversion of public funds to nonpublic schools, for example, through vouchers, tuition tax credits, tax deductions, or choice scholarships.

The League no longer opposes the use of tax referenda to increase local school funding.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Pretrial Release

Persons arrested should be released on their own recognizance or on an unsecured bond unless the court finds financial security necessary to secure appearance for trial or to protect public safety. Certain offenses are constitutionally exempt from bail.

Release on one's own recognizance or an unsecured bond should not be available to those already on pretrial release or arrested for another felony.

Trained judicial and non-judicial personnel should screen defendants eligible for pretrial release as soon as possible after arrest. Bail, if appropriate, should be set without delay.

In all courts, a system of minimum ten-percent cash bail should be readily available. The cash should be returned to the defendants upon disposition of their cases, except that one-tenth of the cash (usually, one percent of the total bail) may be retained from those found guilty, for administration of the program. Persons too poor to afford the administrative fee shall be given

special consideration.

All persons on pretrial release should be placed under supervision.

Unified Courts and Merit System

Indiana should maintain a single statewide court system with uniformity of rules and records, of fiscal responsibility, of assignment of judges and cases, and of administration. As an interim measure, the state should allow court reorganization in individual counties.

All judges should be lawyers and should be free from the influence of pressure groups and political demands.

Candidates for judgeships should be nominated under a merit plan by a commission. Judges should be appointed by the governor, and periodically reviewed for retention by voters. A discipline and removal commission should be readily available to hear public complaints against a judge. It should be authorized to hold confidential hearings and to recommend disciplinary action.

To allow sufficient time for judicial business, judges should be free from non-judicial duties and should be supported by trained staff.

The courts should be fully financed by the state. Access should be guaranteed to all residents without delay, regardless of their financial situation. Indiana should maintain a single statewide court system with uniformity of rules and records, of fiscal responsibility, of assignment of judges and cases, and of administration. As an interim measure, the state should allow court reorganization in individual counties.

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Rehabilitation must be the primary goal of the juvenile justice system. Detention should be used only for the protection of the child or others, or if the child is a flight risk. All children must be treated equitably, regardless of sex, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status. Major community partners, courts, law enforcement, schools, youth service agencies, parents and the community at large-should support an effective and efficient system for the assessment and treatment of juveniles in trouble. Annual study to evaluate the practices and progress toward implementation of best practices is essential.

We support these refinements in the juvenile justice system:

- The continued support and funding of the Department of Corrections Division of Youth Services. The Division of Youth Services oversees all aspects of the Indiana Department

of Corrections juvenile care. The Division of Youth Services has adopted the OJJDP Balanced and Restorative Justice Model.

- Annual Reporting and evaluation by the Division of Youth Services on the effectiveness of the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model and its impact on juveniles.
- Protection of the legal rights of juveniles by providing counsel to the extent possible from the beginning of the intake process.
- No waiving of counsel for juveniles under sixteen years of age.
- A right to counsel for students facing expulsion from school.
- Standardization of the rules of due process for juvenile courts, probation department and the Department of Correction.
- Assistance of the Judicial Center in interpreting laws, notifying and educating juvenile probation staff of changes, and overseeing their enforcement for juvenile courts and law enforcement agencies.
- Required training in child and adolescent development- physical and mental, typical and atypical-and in family systems for judges and probation officers having juvenile jurisdiction, and support for similar training for attorneys and other relevant personnel in juvenile cases.
- Specialized and ongoing continuing education and training for correctional officers who work with juveniles and specific guidelines for work with the juveniles.

Status Offenders

- Status offenders should be assessed, using a standardized assessment tool, at the earliest possible point and should come under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court only as a last resort.
- Handling of status offenders should be uniform throughout the state with specific guidelines about providing status offenders and their families with information and referral to appropriate services based on the above noted standardized assessment tool.
- Primary responsibility for services to status offenders and their families should rest with a network of community partners (i.e. Youth Service Bureaus) offering alternative resources.
- Status offenders should not be detained unless they are a danger to themselves or others.

- Status offenders in detention should be held separately from adjudicated delinquents. Limits should be placed on their detention prior to and during court proceedings.

Delinquent Juvenile Offenders

- A parent or guardian should be required to attend all court proceedings.
- There should be no offense for which a juvenile should automatically be remanded to adult court.
- Judges should retain full discretionary powers to make decisions regarding these juveniles including remanding them to adult courts.
- In Juvenile proceedings it should be possible for parents to be compelled to participate in services that will benefit the family as a whole, as determined by the probation department's assessment of the needs of the juvenile and their family.
- Parents should be responsible for the cost of the crime incurred by their child; however this responsibility should not extend to their being incarcerated for the crime.
- Alternative rehabilitative services rather than incarceration shall be provided when appropriate.
- If detained, appropriate educational instruction must be provided to insure the acquisition of transferrable credits that will lead to educational progress for the juvenile.

Delivery of Services

- Agencies involved in juvenile justice should coordinate their activities to insure adequate services at a community level. This could include collaborations with state wide associations such as the Probation Officers Professional Association of Indiana and the Indiana Youth Services Association.
- The state of Indiana should act as a catalyst in providing services and programs for juveniles and provide a recognized forum to foster communication and networking of agencies.
- The development of delinquency prevention services should be a state priority with support and funding for community based efforts of prevention.

Law Enforcement and Police Training

- Law enforcement personnel should have the authority to refer juveniles, especially status offenders, to voluntary agencies.

- Law enforcement training should include a curriculum which includes emphasis on juvenile law and techniques for handling juveniles effectively.
- Law enforcement who work with juveniles should have specific and on-going training and specific guidelines for handling juveniles.

Detention

Needs Include:

- 24 hour a day intake services by qualified personnel in each county.
- Statewide guidelines for holding or detaining a child.
- A statutory limit on the period of time a juvenile may be held without a determination hearing.
- The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative that is being used in 19 counties, should be statewide and serving all 92 counties.

Institutionalization and alternatives

- Community based detention and correctional programs at the local and regional levels are preferred, with centralized state institutions housing only the most serious offenders.
- When a youth is detained away from home, the financial responsibility should be shared by both local and state governmental agencies.
- All facilities must provide diagnostic health services as well as physical and mental health care. If a juvenile is detained longer than 60 days, the facility should follow the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for well-child care and be sure that each juvenile is up to date with required vaccinations and inoculations.
- The state should set minimum uniform standards for hiring and evaluating job performance at all facilities.
- Paroled juvenile offenders and their families need access to services. The cost of these services should be shared by the county, state and federal governments and whenever possible, by the parents.

Probation

Updated January 15, 2017

- Promote professionalism of juvenile probation officers by means of legislative lobbying, education, uniform standards for hiring probation personnel and networking.
- Provide adequate salaries.
- Establish caseload limits that allow for better service to juveniles.
- Promote and advance progressive and effective probation practices.
- Support and promote standardized probation services throughout the state.
- Educate the public and enhance community awareness and acceptance of probation as a necessary component of the criminal justice system.
- Subsidize with state funding, counties that meet certain uniform probation standards

Record Keeping

- The courts and law enforcement agencies should maintain a uniform system of confidential records separate from those of social service agencies. Access to these records should be available only on an as needed basis to social service staff who are providing services to the juveniles and their families.
- Automatic destruction of records of status offenders and other misdemeanor offenders following a period of two years of no re-offending behavior.

The Public School's Role

- All schools in Indiana should have resources available to provide alternatives to suspending or expelling students.
- School Principals should be able to place the juvenile in an appropriate educationally related program.
- Each school corporation should address absences of 10 days or more per semester, through their local prosecutor.
- School corporations should be responsible for providing alternative classroom education for disruptive or delinquent juveniles.
- The community and school should make available the following voluntary services to juveniles expelled from school: job skill training and or apprenticeships; counseling; alternative schooling; independent living skills training. These services should be paid for by a mix of local and state governmental funds and parental funds.

- Schools must provide parents/guardians with community resource information for basic needs and family supports.
- Whenever possible suspended or expelled students should be integrated back into the school environment with supports to offer opportunities for successful reintegration.

Juvenile Justice Position approved by Concurrence April 2016.

SOCIAL POLICY

Education

League of Women Voters of Indiana supports a free, publicly - funded, nonsectarian system of schools serving all the state's children from pre-school through 12th grade.

Education Position approved by Concurrence Feb 2016.

Mandatory Kindergarten

The League of Women Voters of Indiana favors mandatory state-supported kindergarten school attendance. It supports requiring school corporations to establish either a full-day or a combination full-day and half-day program for kindergarten. If both are offered, the parents should determine in which program their child participates. This position assumes that state government will provide full tuition support at the same level as that provided for public school children in first grade.

Children at Risk

For the purpose of this position, an at-risk child is defined as one who may be prevented from achieving full potential because of factors such as abuse, neglect, mental or physical disabilities, behavioral disorders, socio-economic status. A position of LWVUS addresses early intervention.

Every child has the right to grow up in a safe and supportive environment.

Left untreated, some of today's children at risk may become tomorrow's juvenile offenders and the future's adult offenders. In general, neglect of at-risk children may lead to higher cost to society later.

The League supports education of the public about the need for early identification of children at risk, related societal and individual problems, and potential solutions.

Social service agencies serving at-risk children should be adequately staffed and funded.

Updated January 15, 2017

Community resources should be coordinated.

Intervention and preventive treatment should begin as early as possible, including newborn home visits by qualified professionals. The entire family group should be involved.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a serious threat to the well-being of Indiana families.

A consistently used definition of domestic violence facilitates its detection and documentation. It serves law enforcement, rehabilitation, public education and other ways of addressing this problem.

Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and mental abuse. It includes stalking, harassment, trespassing, threats and intimidation, and also the destruction of another person's property. Parties to domestic violence are those who are or have been spouses, unmarried couples, cohabitants, non-cohabitants in an ongoing relationship, children, or relatives. For the purpose of record-keeping, domestic violence should be regarded as a category separate from battery, or as a distinct subcategory. It should be treated no less seriously than battery.

The League supports mandatory uniform reporting and compilation of data on domestic violence by law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, local and state courts, and health care providers. The privacy of victims must be protected.

Adequate training should be required for health care providers and the personnel of law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices and courts who come into contact with domestic violence.

Penalties should be uniform throughout the state. A second offense should be treated as a felony and subsequent offenses should be subject to the habitual offender statute, with mandatory hold for any offender. There should be strict penalties for the violation of protective/restraining orders. Other laws that affect domestic violence cases, such as the use of probable cause, should be strictly applied.

Victims should be encouraged to access counseling and court-ordered assistance programs. Counseling should be mandatory for first offenders.

Shelters and victim services should be funded adequately, by public or private means. Public funding sources could include marriage license fees and fees charged to offenders.

Educating the public is important, to prevent domestic violence and to increase public awareness and understanding.

General Assistance

Support of a state-administered general assistance program and of state standards for eligibility, benefits, accessibility, and appeals, as well as a program which is adequately and equitably financed.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana supports a general assistance (formerly, "poor relief") program that is state administered and supervised according to state standards of eligibility, benefits, accessibility, and appeal procedures. This program should fill the gaps that are unmet by categorical assistance in Indiana for those persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available.

Eligibility and benefit standards should be adjustable for local differences and cost-of-living changes. Offices for service should be as close as possible to the target population.

The general assistance program should be equitably financed throughout the state, and financing should be sufficient to meet the needs of the program. Criteria for general assistance should include the following provisions:

Eligibility should be based on need. Residency, work in exchange for assistance, lack of support by a relative, repayment, or prior application to other social service agencies should not be requirements for assistance; however, referral to other agencies should be made where appropriate, especially to agencies that provide job training and other employment programs. Decisions on eligibility for emergency assistance should be made within a reasonable time.

Benefits should be sufficient to meet adequate standards for food, clothing, shelter, and other basic needs. Standards should be adjusted for local differences, and revised periodically for cost-of-living changes. Recipients should have as wide a choice as possible in selecting providers.

Access to services should be made as convenient as possible for all applicants. Regular office hours, including evening hours, should be established. Provision should be made for emergency services after office hours and on weekends. These hours should be prominently posted and publicized. Applications should be accepted in person, by telephone or letter, or by a designee; but at all times the privacy of the applicant should be protected. If the applicant so desires, an advocate and/or translator should be present at all interviews or proceedings.

Appeal procedures should provide applicants with a fair and meaningful opportunity to have their requests for assistance reviewed. Appeal procedures should be prominently posted and also explained to the applicant orally when an application is denied or assistance is discontinued. Appeal decisions should be based only on information provided at hearings, must be made in writing, and must include reasons for the decision. Appellants should be permitted to examine records pertaining to them and to use those documents as evidence.

Competent, trained personnel should administer the general assistance program, hired and compensated according to state personnel policies. Annual detailed reports should be required from each general assistance office. Supervision, accountability, and enforcement of state standards and procedures should be lodged in a public office at state level. Administrative boards at state and local levels should be representative of the communities they serve and should

convene regular public hearings to elicit information and opinions from the general public. All rules regarding administration of the general assistance program should be written, posted, distributed, and otherwise made available to all applicants and to the general public, in English and in other languages where appropriate.

The state should bear the major cost of financing both administration and benefits of the general assistance program, with local governments sharing the financial responsibility. Budgets should be based on the requirements of the program for sufficient funds to serve all who meet state standards of eligibility and need.

Each general assistance office should maintain an open relationship with other agencies in the community, distributing information on available general assistance services and procedures and keeping on file an up-to-date list of services provided by others. Referrals to other agencies should be made where appropriate.

In implementing this position, the state board is to be guided by the following member preferences:

- that general assistance be administered by the Indiana Department of Public Welfare, or
- that the township trustee system of administering general assistance be retained, with state-imposed standards, or
- that a separate general assistance system be formed, with non-elected personnel.

Health Care

The position is based on and supplements the national position which advocates that all U.S. residents should have access to a basic level of health care, supported by public funding and administration.

It is the responsibility of the state to regulate health care facilities and ancillary facilities, to license health care providers, and in other ways to protect the health of Indiana residents. This role is mainly the responsibility of the Department of Health, with other state offices and bureaus and local health departments having a regulatory and/or enforcement role. Protection of the health of Indiana's residents requires that the state establish, maintain and enforce adequate standards for health care agencies and workers.

Coordination of care is essential for those receiving both short-and long-term care. It requires identifying and assessing need, determining a plan for delivery of services, advocating for those in need, and reassessing service delivery over time.

Certain services for daily living and general health maintenance can be provided in the home and community by family caregivers and professionals. When supported by public funding, these services should be at least as cost-effective as those in residential institutions, and of comparable quality.

Governmental and non-governmental funding of programs to promote healthful lifestyles is to be encouraged, but the state should act where adequate local programs do not exist.

Hospitals should not make up shortfalls from Medicare and Medicaid by shifting costs to commercially insured and paying patients. This burden should be spread among all taxpayers until a single payer system is adopted.

The state should have a process for allocating services to underserved areas and should ensure a mechanism for local input.

Illegal Substances

Through comprehensive programs and cooperation, law enforcement agencies and the judicial system must seek to eliminate the manufacture, distribution and use of illegal substances. The effort should include the pooling of information and resources, prevention and intervention strategies, and education.

Related health care and social services should be available to all who suffer the effects of substance abuse.

The effort can only succeed through constant cooperation among the involved public agencies and with non-governmental organizations offering support.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Great Lakes Ecosystem

In 2012, 14 of 20 local Indiana Leagues concurred with the LWV-Michigan position on the Great Lakes Ecosystem. Following a request from a local League, the LWVIN Board held an e-meeting and recommended that the Convention formally ask the LWVIN Board to consider adopting the position. The position was accepted at Convention, 2013, and then formally adopted by the LWVIN Board on June 22, 2013.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana supports preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem. We support the attainment and maintenance of high water quality standards throughout the Great Lakes Basin, with emphasis on water pollution prevention. Water conservation should be a high priority of all governments in the Basin.

I. Protective Measures

To achieve protection and improvement of this valuable, international resource, the League of Women Voters of Indiana supports efforts to:

- A. Limit uses of "fragile," historical, cultural and scenic shoreline areas.

- B. Preserve wild and pristine areas within the watershed, with no new development in these special habitats without adherence to strict criteria as prescribed by federal, state, or local governments.
- C. Provide for appropriate recreational opportunities in and public access to sensitive areas without destruction or harm to the ecosystem.
- D. Protect the quality of the air and waters of the ecosystem by strict adherence to agricultural, industrial, residential, environmental, and commercial zoning regulations that prohibit the introduction of toxic or polluting discharges or detrimental land use techniques within the Basin.
- E. Protect the remaining dune formations. Enforce strict regulations of sand dune mining or development on the dunes.
- F. Strengthen upstream land management to eliminate sources of siltation and pollution.
- G. Control the invasion and spread of non-native aquatic and terrestrial nuisance species.

II. Threats to the Ecosystem

The League of Women Voters of Indiana opposes the following activities as they can lead to the degradation of the special natural resources of the Great Lakes Ecosystem:

- A. Inefficient or excessive water uses. Proposals for new or increased withdrawals within the Basin, e.g. for agricultural or municipal uses, should be carefully evaluated before being permitted. Withdrawals should be regularly monitored for potential or actual damage to the ecosystem.
- B. Destruction of marshes and other wetlands throughout the watershed. Mitigation should be accepted only as a last resort. Mitigation proposals should be rigorously evaluated and projects should be strictly monitored to assure no net loss to the ecosystem.
- C. New or increased diversions or transfers by any means of Great Lakes waters and adjacent ground waters to a place outside the Basin. Projects already in place should be carefully monitored and restricted if there is evidence of damage to the ecosystem.
- D. Dredging and filling of river inlets, harbors, lakes or wetlands except for tightly-controlled, non-degrading and non-repetitive activities.
- E. Discharge to air or water of toxic pollutants and other material from industrial, agricultural, residential or commercial operations that may damage the ecosystem in violation of laws and ordinances.

III. Public Participation

The League of Women Voters of Indiana supports informed and responsible action on behalf of the preservation of the Great Lakes Ecosystem. Relevant information should be readily available to the public. Opportunities for public input should be timely, accessible, convenient and well-advertised.

IV. Role of Government

The League of Women Voters of Indiana supports:

- A. Coordination of functions among various governmental agencies charged with protecting the Great Lakes and elimination of unnecessary overlap.

- B. Use of area-wide coordinated management plans and techniques in the solving of Great Lakes Ecosystem problems.
 - C. Participation by all affected governments in the Basin in review and decision-making on Great Lakes agreements and projects, facilitated in open meetings and hearings.
 - D. Strengthening of existing mechanisms for intergovernmental discussions and decision-making.
 - E. Separation of responsibility for submitting recommendations for governmental projects from issuing permits for such projects.
 - F. Monitoring and enforcement of treaties, ordinances, laws and master plans.
- V. Research Priorities
- The League of Women Voters of Indiana believes that research on Great Lakes issues should focus on:
- A. Effective, non-toxic control and removal of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species.
 - B. Restoration of health to the overall resource.
 - C. Survival of native aquatic and terrestrial species and their nutrient sources.
 - D. Continual testing of Great Lakes water quality for impact from the following: pesticides and fertilizers, resistant bacteria, persistent pharmaceuticals and other chemicals.
 - E. Evaluation of water accountability systems, groundwater monitoring and water use planning and conservation efforts throughout the Basin.