

PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

League of Women Voters of North Carolina

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Goals

- **Government should be open, accountable, ethical and responsive to citizens.**
- **Citizen participation on state boards should be encouraged.**
- **Measures to eliminate barriers to voting should be encouraged.**
- **Authority for administration and enforcement of election laws should be centralized in the State Board of Elections.**
- **Elections should be applied consistently across the state and from one county to another.**
- **A permanent, uniform voter registration should be maintained across the state.**
- **Training of election officials should be mandated and paid for by the state at both state and county levels.**

ELECTION LAWS

Promote measures that safeguard the rights of the voter and encourage clear and democratic election procedures. Promote and support election laws in North Carolina that emphasize full participation of all citizens in the democratic process.

ELECTION PROCESS. The decennial census requires nationwide and statewide reapportionment and redistricting, providing an opportunity to review mandates of the North Carolina Constitution as well as of the Voting Rights Act. The original LWV positions support centralization of authority for administration and enforcement of election laws and on the consistency of application of such laws across the state and from one county to another.

FAIR & EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION

Congressional districts, both houses of the state legislature, county, as well as municipal government districts including boards of education, should be apportioned primarily according to population. Districts should be single-member, compact, convenient, contiguous, and should reflect a community of interest. Specific standards of fair representation as required by the National Voting Rights Acts should be assured.

The responsibility for redistricting and reapportioning should rest with an independent agency

commissioned by the legislature once every ten years; the agency plan (for redistricting) should be submitted for legislative approval without amendment. The independent agency should not be a court. While the agency should reflect the geographic, racial, and gender make-up of the state population, no elected official should be a member. As a creature of the legislature, the agency should be subject to the Open Meetings Law. Definite provisions should be made for compensation and staff services of the independent agency.

A process should be provided to effect automatic, compulsory and periodic redistricting and reapportioning. Measures to enact this process should include: authority, enforcement powers, time schedule, and funding. The specific measure may take the form of a constitutional amendment or legislation.

Specific provisions should be made for court review of redistricting and reapportioning measures and for courts to require the independent agency to act on a specific schedule.

The state and its political subdivisions should be re-districted and reapportioned every ten years within a year of certification of the census.

Definite time limits should be set for an agency to act after the decennial census figures are available in order to comply with federal Voting Rights legislation. Time limits should be set for initiating court action for review of the constitutionality of measures.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

CITIZEN RIGHTS

PUBLIC POLICY ON REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES. Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

FISCAL POLICY

TAX POLICY. Support an equitable and efficient system of taxation in North Carolina that will adequately fund needed services at both the state and local level.

- The burden of taxes should be in proportion to the citizens' ability to pay.

GOVERNMENT

- All citizens have the duty/right to contribute to the common good.
- For government to tax in excess of the requirements of the common good or to waste tax revenues is unjust since this unfairly deprives the citizen of his property and the product of his labor without a corresponding common benefit.
- The taxation and appropriation process should allow government the necessary flexibility for responsible fiscal management.
- The use of tax laws as incentives or disincentives to action should be viewed in the light of the common good.
- The granting of tax preferences (e.g., exemptions, deductions, etc.) should be genuinely premised on the promotion of the common interest and not upon special interest or favoritism.
- Taxes once established should be collected with even-handed enforcement.
- The norm for choosing a form of taxation should first be the equitable distribution of civic burden and not the ease of collection or lack of popular opposition. However, where there are equivalent, equitable options the simpler methods should be used.
- The tax system should be diversified to provide a broad revenue base and to minimize the effect of imperfections in any one tax. Each form of taxation should not be examined in isolation but evaluated as part of the total tax system. Further, the impact of tax laws should be consistent with other public policies, e.g., the conservation of energy, the preservation of neighborhoods, etc.

CORPORATE INCOME TAXES. Support a corporate income tax schedule with graduated rates increasing as income rises. General business franchise rates, taxes and other franchise rates should be reviewed and adjusted. Exemptions for business should be reconsidered.

HIGHWAY FUND TAXES. If more revenue is needed for the highway fund, the highway use tax and overweight permits should be increased. Remove the \$300 ceiling on the motor vehicle tax.

INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX. The current state individual income tax system should be simplified and better reflect ability to pay. Methods of determining individual taxable income should be aligned more closely with the federal income tax system. The state can apply its own policies through adjustments to income and levels of deductions. Joint return filing should be permitted. The standard deduction should be increased, and provisions made for future ad-

justments through periodic review and revision. Tax progressivism should be established with a broader range of tax rates, and the threshold for paying any income tax needs to be raised. Any exemptions should be applied to all types of pensions.

PROPERTY TAXES. Low-income property owners should be protected by some form of "circuit breaker" when they cannot afford the property tax.

SALES TAX. Regressive taxes on essential products and services, such as food and utilities, should be removed. Current exemptions and preferential sales tax rates should be reviewed to determine if they are justified, consistent, and equitable. There should be an equitable extension of the sales tax to all services.

NEW REVENUE SOURCES. All local governments should be given the option to utilize new revenue sources such as impact fees, land transfer fees, and room occupancy fees. There should be a severance tax for the removal of natural products from the ground.

NON-PARTISAN SELECTION OF JUDGES

The League supports:

- Non-partisan selection of judges
- The concept of a broadly-based judiciary nominating commission for the selection of well-qualified nominees and appointment, preferably from the nominees.

LWVNC and local Leagues may act upon any of the positions taken by LWVUS. A complete list of the LWVUS positions can be found at www.lwv.org.