

League of Women Voters Positions that Currently Impact Natural Resources

League of Women Voters of Virginia and League of Women Voters of United States

LWV of Virginia's (From Positioned for Action – July 2015)

Air Quality

The League's Position

In order to achieve and maintain acceptable air quality the League of Women Voters of Virginia believes Virginia should:

- Adopt the California Standards for low-emission vehicles to achieve and maintain compliance with the Clean Air Act of 1990.
- Develop less polluting alternative fuels, a high priority with preference for compressed natural gas, reformulated gasoline, electricity and hydrogen. The State should consider total environmental impact of a fuel, including tail pipe emissions and pollution produced during manufacture and disposal.
- Change parking subsidies away from those favoring low occupancy vehicles to those favoring efficient transportation modes. Place greater emphasis on local program and regulations that encourage employers to institute transportation management systems which foster efficient transportation modes.(1993)

Land Use

The League's Position

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that the Commonwealth should have a long range comprehensive plan reflecting the needs and interests of citizens and flexible enough to meet future needs. The plan should be a coordinated one including plans and policies of local, regional and state governments. Implementation should maximize local decision- making with some provisions subject to state established standards and review.

State Control of Land Use:

We believe that the state should reassume certain elements of its legal authority to control the use of land. Stronger state control, with impact statements required as deemed necessary, is needed for land use activities of more than local impact (including the siting of energy facilities, large-scale public or private development, major transportation facilities, and waste disposal facilities).

Increased state control is needed for certain land areas of statewide concern such as:

- Wetlands
- Crucial watersheds
- Flood plains
- Productive agricultural and forest lands
- Unique scenic and historic areas
- Shorelines of major waters and
- Unique wildlife habitats.

Regional Planning

The League believes that the state should support increased regional planning on matters of regional concern.

State Assistance to Localities

The League believes that the state should give assistance to localities for land use planning and control by:

- Increasing financial aid for research and technical assistance;
- Collecting, analyzing and disseminating economic, environmental and social data;
- Authorizing and encouraging innovative land use planning and regulatory techniques such as land banking, planned unit development, transfer of development rights, and timed development ordinances. (1975)

Water Supply and Distribution

The League's Position

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that modifications should be made to Virginia's water laws, based on the riparian doctrine and the Ground Water Act of 1973.

Specifically we believe that:

- The law should recognize the connection between ground and surface water;
- Decisions about reasonable use of ground water should include the concept of sharing, as in the riparian doctrine;
- Exemptions in the Ground Water Act of 1973 should be tightened; and
- If the resolution of conflicts is in the Courts, expert technical advice should be provided.

The League believes that the state must fulfill its responsibility for gathering information about Virginia's water resources, planning for future supply, and giving assistance to localities about their water supplies; and that:

- The designated agency must be strengthened and adequately funded;
- The state should have a strong land use policy that recognizes that water and land-use planning are indivisible; and
- The state should take the lead, both by education and by legislation, in promoting water conservation. (1983)

The League supports the moratorium on uranium mining. The Commonwealth must establish modern, enforceable, and proven effective best practices to protect the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment before uranium mining, processing, and reclamation occurs. The Commonwealth must ensure that tangible economic benefits exist even if industry can develop modern best practices specific to the unique environment of Virginia. Further, if the Commonwealth adopts best practices approved by an independent assessment team such as the National Academy of Science (NAS) or other independent scientific organization, it must also provide the staff and funds needed by the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Department of Health, and other state agencies to thoroughly monitor and regulate uranium mining.

According to the December 2012 NAS report “the waste from mining and milling if not adequately controlled may contaminate the local environment by seeping into water sources.” Some high population centers would most likely be affected if contaminants were inadequately isolated. Further, because Virginia is at risk of hurricanes and intense rainfall, concern exists about the effectiveness of the uranium tailings repositories to prevent surface and groundwater contamination. Tourism and agriculture, important economic drivers for the Commonwealth, depend on clean water which could be compromised by uranium mining. (2014)

LWV of United States (From Impact on Issues – 2014-2016)

Natural Resources

The League’s Position

Statement of Position on Natural Resources, as Affirmed by the 1986 Convention, Based on Positions Reached from 1958 Through 1986: The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

Resource Management

The League's Position

Resource management decisions must be based on a thorough assessment of population growth and of current and future needs. The inherent characteristics and carrying capacities of each area's natural resources must be considered in the planning process. Policy makers must take into account the ramifications of their decisions on the nation as a whole as well as on other nations.

To assure the future availability of essential resources, government policies must promote stewardship of natural resources. Policies that promote resource conservation are a fundamental part of such stewardship. Resources such as water and soil should be protected. Consumption of nonrenewable resources should be minimized. Beneficiaries should pay the costs for water, land and energy development projects. Reclamation and reuse of natural resources should be encouraged.

The League believes that protection and management of natural resources are responsibilities shared by all levels of government. The federal government should provide leadership, guidance and financial assistance to encourage regional planning and decision making to enhance local and state capabilities for resource management.

The League supports comprehensive long-range planning and believes that wise decision-making requires:

- adequate data and a framework within which alternatives may be weighed and intelligent decisions made;
- consideration of environmental, public health, social and economic impacts of proposed plans and actions;
- protection of private property rights commensurate with overall consideration of public health and environmental protection;
- coordination of the federal government's responsibilities and activities;
- resolution of inconsistencies and conflicts in basic policy among governmental agencies at all levels;
- regional, interregional and/or international cooperation when appropriate;
- mechanisms appropriate to each region that will provide coordinated planning and administration among units of government, governmental agencies and the private sector;
- procedures for resolving disputes;
- procedures for mitigation of adverse impacts;
- special responsibility by each level of government for those lands and resources entrusted to them;

- special consideration for the protection of areas of critical environmental concern, natural hazards, historical importance and aesthetic value;
- special attention to maintaining and improving the environmental quality of urban communities.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control (Water Resources, Solid Waste, Nuclear Waste)

The League's Position

The League supports the preservation of the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment. The League's approach to environmental protection and pollution control is one of problem solving. The interrelationships of air, water and land resources should be recognized in designing environmental safeguards. The League's environmental protection and anti-pollution goals aim to prevent ecological degradation and to reduce and control pollutants before they go down the sewer, up the chimney or into the landfill.

The League believes that although environmental protection and pollution control are responsibilities shared by all levels of government, it is essential that the federal government provide leadership and technical and financial assistance.

The federal government should have the major role in setting standards for environmental protection and pollution control. Other levels of government should have the right to set more stringent standards. Enforcement should be carried out at the lower levels of government, but the federal government should enforce standards if other levels of government do not meet this responsibility. Standards must be enforced in a timely, consistent and equitable manner for all violators in all parts of society, including governmental units, industry, business and individuals.

Environmental protection and pollution control, including waste management, should be considered a cost of providing a product or service. Consumers, taxpayers and ratepayers must expect to pay some of the costs. The League supports policies that accelerate pollution control, including federal financial assistance for state and local programs.

The League supports:

- regulation of pollution sources by control and penalties;
- inspection and monitoring;
- full disclosure of pollution data;
- incentives to accelerate pollution control;
- vigorous enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions for states and localities that do not
- comply with federal standards and substantial fines for noncompliance.

Further Guidelines and Criteria

Air Quality

The League supports:

- measures to reduce vehicular pollution, including inspection and maintenance of emission controls, changes in engine design and fuel types and development of more energy- efficient transportation systems;
- regulation and reduction of pollution from stationary sources;
- regulation and reduction of ambient toxic-air pollutants;
- measures to reduce transboundary air pollutants, such as ozone and those that cause acid deposition.

Energy

The League supports:

- energy goals and policies that acknowledge the United States as a responsible member of the world community;
- reduction of energy growth rates;
- use of a variety of energy sources, with emphasis on conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies;
- the environmentally sound use of energy resources, with consideration of the entire cycle of energy production;
- predominant reliance on renewable resources;
- policies that limit reliance on nuclear fission;
- action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources and energy conservation through funding for research and development, financial incentives, rate-setting policies and mandatory standards;
- mandatory energy-conservation measures, including thermal standards for building efficiency, new appliance standards and standards for new automobiles with no relaxation of auto-emission control requirements;
- policies to reduce energy demand and minimize the need for new generating capacity through techniques such as marginal cost or peak-load pricing or demandmanagement programs;
- maintaining deregulation of oil and natural gas prices;
- assistance for low-income individuals when energy policies bear unduly on the poor.

Land Use

The League supports:

- management of land as a finite resource not as a commodity, since land ownership, whether public or private, carries responsibility for stewardship;
- land-use planning that reflects conservation and wise management of resources;
- identification and regulation of areas of critical concern:
- fragile or historical lands, where development could result in irreversible damage (such as shore-lands of rivers, lakes and streams, estuaries and bays; rare or valuable ecosystems and geological formations; significant wildlife habitats; unique scenic or historic areas; wetlands; deserts);
- renewable resource lands, where development could result in the loss of productivity (such as watersheds, aquifers and aquifer-recharge areas, significant agricultural and grazing lands, forest lands);
- natural hazard lands, where development could endanger life and property (such as floodplains, areas with high seismic or volcanic activity, areas of unstable geologic, ice or snow formations);
- reclamation of lands damaged by surface mining, waste disposal, overgrazing, timber harvesting, farming and other activities;
- acquisition of land for public use; identification and regulation of areas impacted by public or private investment where siting results in secondary environmental and socioeconomic impacts;
- review of environmental, social and economic impacts of major public and private developments;
- review of federally funded projects by all government levels;
- conformance of federal land resource activities with approved state programs, particularly where state standards are more stringent than federal standards.

Water Resources

The League supports:

- water resource programs and policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality, water quantity, ground-water and surface water and that address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies;
- measures to reduce water pollution from direct point-source discharges and from indirect nonpoint sources;

- policies to achieve water quality essential for maintaining species populations and diversity, including measures to protect lakes, estuaries, wetlands and in-stream flows;
- stringent controls to protect the quality of current and potential drinking-water supplies, including protection of watersheds for surface supplies and of recharge areas for groundwater.

Waste Management

The League supports:

- policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes;
- • policies to ensure safe treatment, transportation, storage and disposal of solid and hazardous wastes in order to protect public health and air, water and land resources;
- planning and decision making processes that recognize suitable solid and hazardous wastes as potential resources;
- policies for the management of civilian and military high- and low-level radioactive wastes to protect public health, and air, water and land resources;
- the establishment of processes for effective involvement of state and local governments and citizens in siting proposals for treatment, storage, disposal and transportation of radioactive wastes;
- full environmental review of treatment, storage and disposal facilities for radioactive wastes; safe transport, storage and disposal of radioactive wastes.

Criteria for Siting Waste Disposal Facilities

The following criteria are derived from the League's Natural Resources positions. They were developed to assist state and local Leagues in reviewing specific waste disposal sites and to help state and local Leagues evaluate both the process employed in site selection and the suitability of a proposed site or hazardous and radioactive waste treatment, storage and disposal facilities. This decision-making process should provide for:

- ample and effective opportunities for public participation, including funding to conduct such participation;
- evaluation of economic, social and environmental impacts so that decision makers and the public have adequate information on which to base a decision. In addition to the actual site, secondary land use impacts—such as buffer areas, adequacy of roads, sewers, water, etc.—should be considered;
- an examination of alternative sites and methods of treatment and disposal. Comparison of costs must include short- and long-term costs, such as liability insurance, postclosure maintenance,

monitoring of ground and surface waters and air before and after closure, and potential loss of land or water resources due to contamination;

- participation and review by all government levels to assure conformance with all adopted comprehensive plans at each level of government;
- procedures for resolution of intergovernmental conflicts.

Hazardous and radioactive waste treatment, storage or disposal facilities should be sited in areas that pose the least amount of risk to the public and to sensitive environmental areas. They should be located away from areas of critical concern such as:

- natural hazard areas subject to flooding, earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes or subsidence;
- drinking water supply sources, such as reservoirs, lakes and rivers and their watersheds, and aquifers and their recharge areas;
- fragile land areas, such as shorelines of rivers, lakes, streams, oceans and estuaries, bays or wetlands; • rare or valuable ecosystems or geologic formations, significant wildlife habitat or unique scenic or historic areas;
- areas with significant renewable resource value, such as prime agricultural lands or grazing and forest lands that would be destroyed as a result of the siting of hazardous waste facilities;
- residential areas, parks and schools.

(Note: sections for Nuclear Issues and Defense Wastes were not included as they did not appear to be applicable to the hydraulic fracturing study.)

Public Participation

The League's Position

The League believes that public understanding and cooperation are essential to the responsible and responsive management of our nation's natural resources. The public has a right to know about pollution levels, dangers to health and the environment, and proposed resource management policies and options. The public has a right to participate in decision-making at each phase in the process and at each level of government involvement. Officials should make a special effort to develop readily understandable procedures for public involvement and to ensure that the public has adequate information to participate effectively. Public records should be readily accessible at all governmental levels. Adequate funding is needed to ensure opportunities for public education and effective public participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.

The appropriate level of government should publicize, in an extensive and timely manner and in readily available sources, information about pollution levels, pollution-abatement programs, and resource management policies and options. Hearings should be held in easily accessible locations, at

convenient times and, when possible, in the area concerned. The hearing procedures and other opportunities for public comment should actively encourage citizen participation in decision-making.

The League supports public education that provides a basic understanding of the environment and the social, economic and environmental costs and benefits of environmental protection, pollution control and conservation.

Mechanisms for citizen appeal must be guaranteed, including access to the courts. Due process rights for the affected public and private parties must be assured.