

League of Women Voters of New Castle County

Action Positions 2015-2017

Adopted June 22, 2015

Background information

At the annual meeting 3/16/87, the entire action positions were revised. At the 1988 annual meeting the sections dealing with NCC WATER SUPPLY and EDUCATION were dropped because of the LWVUS and State positions adequately covered those positions. The Board adopted the updated NCC FINANCE CONSENSUS at its June 1988 meeting, with a request to separate into a separate section those sections specifically addressing the City of Wilmington.

In April of 1994 the LWV of Greater Wilmington and LWV of Greater Newark merged to form the LWV of New Castle County and at that annual meeting the entire action positions of both Leagues were adopted. These merged positions were completely revised and included a new consensus on SCHOOL LIBRARIES, and were adopted at the annual meeting in March of 1996 as well as a new study on LAND USE and new consensus on Transportation. A new position on Needle Exchange under the subheading Justice System was adopted 12, 2005.

ACTION POSITIONS

*Relative to New Castle County & the Cities of Newark & Wilmington

*Readopted 6/6/2011, Revised 4/009-3/07-12/05 - 4/05 - 4/03 - 4/01- 4/99 - 4/97 - 3/96 - 4/95- 4/94 - 4/91 - 4/90 - 1/89 - 3/88 - 2/87 - 7/85 - 9/77 - 10/74

The League of Women Voters of New Castle County may also take action under positions of the LWV of Delaware and those of the LWV of the United States.

GOVERNMENT Support for programs and policies which promote ethical, efficient and effective government.

New Castle County

Support for:

- Home rule and the existing County Council and the Executive Form of government
- Programs and policies which promote ethical, efficient and effective government for New Castle County.
- The concept of merit principles.

City of Newark

Support for:

- Council-manager form of government.
- Newark's Home Rule Charter.
- A comprehensive planning policy for regulation of growth for optimal land use, with attention to League's New Castle County land use positions.
- Measures to ensure a viable Central Business District

City of Wilmington

- Support for an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive to all citizens.

REVENUE STRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Support for fiscal measures to provide revenue sufficient for essential government services for the entire county, including municipalities such as the Cities of Wilmington and Newark which serve the County.

New Castle County

Support for:

- Fiscal measures to provide revenue sufficient for essential government services for the entire county.
- Property tax as the primary source of revenue for county government. Property tax assessments should be kept up-to-date and equitable. Tax-exempt properties should be kept to a minimum.

Specific considerations pertaining to tax-exempt properties:

- We favor tax-exemptions for public schools and for public and private post-high school educational facilities (classrooms, laboratories, etc.), if they meet accreditation and degree-granting requirements.
 - We oppose tax-exemptions for parsonages and investment properties held by religious organizations as well as for facilities owned by educational institutions which are not part of the educational program, such as faculty residences. Profit-making properties owned by both public and private educational institutions should be taxed.
 - An important consideration for granting tax-exemptions for charitable and recreational facilities should be whether the government would otherwise have to provide the service. Properties which do not offer such necessary services should be taxed. Properties which perform a social welfare function and fire companies were mentioned as deserving an exemption.
 - Required payments in lieu of taxes were considered desirable if the level of service can be fairly assessed and would warrant such payment.
 - We believe that elderly or disabled people with limited income should be given special consideration on the property taxes on the house in which they live.
- Administration of services such as public works, sewer, police, parks and recreation, libraries, community development and housing; and planning at the County level.
 - Realty transfer taxes, user fees for measurable services (e.g. sewer, water, parks fees), impact fees on new development.
 - Emergency services (9-1-1 Communications network, paramedic response teams and police) which are essential and should be available statewide. New Castle County should receive an equitable share of state funding.
 - County administration of housing for low income citizens financed by federal or state government

City of Newark

Support for:

- Property taxes and user fees on measurable services as the bulk of local income.
Specific considerations:
 - Narrow-based taxes and earmarked revenues should be avoided EXCEPT in cases where they relate directly and exclusively to a benefit for the group taxed. User fees should be continued for water and electricity. The rates may provide profit to the city as long as they are comparable to rates charged by private companies in the area. Services should be financed or subsidized from general revenues whenever they benefit the community as a whole, i.e. trash collection, library services, parks.
- Property taxes which are equitable through up-to-date assessments and coordination with county assessments.
- Minimizing the number of tax-exempt properties because they add an extra financial burden.

City of Wilmington:

Finances of the City of Wilmington which had been part of the old Action Position under the New Castle County finance position, Paying for Local Government were dropped in 1/14/89.

NATURAL RESOURCES (4/2005)

Support of policies that protect air and water quality in New Castle County.

LAND USE PLANNING

CONTINUING STUDY: Examine developments and concepts in land use and transportation.

LAND USE

Support of the regulation of growth and optimum use of land in New Castle County through a comprehensive planning policy. Monitoring of land use policies and procedures in NCC and their relationship to human needs, population trends, transportation planning, and ecological and socioeconomic factors. Encouragement of continuing cooperation among governmental agencies.

New Castle County/City of Wilmington/City of Newark

Support for:

- A comprehensive planning policy which includes:
 - Necessary implementing ordinances and their enforcement.
 - Impact fees on new development
 - Transit as an important factor in controlling development.
 - The realized interconnectedness between land use and transportation planning.
 - Provision for heterogeneous communities (Planned Unit Development or new towns) which include different types of housing, commerce, light industry and/or community facilities.
- Strict control of development in flood plain areas.
- Preservation of farmland, open space, and natural areas, specially the stream areas.
- Coordination among agencies and various levels of government involved in land use.
- Provisions for informed and active participation of citizens in governmental planning process.
- Favorable tax treatment for farm and non-farm open land as part of a comprehensive policy for preserving open land.
 - A roll-back in taxes and/or other tax measures to recover lost public revenue should be considered when open land is rezoned, subdivided or sold for development.

City of Newark

- Within the City of Newark; land acquisition, development and maintenance of recreation areas and a professionally staffed parks and recreation program adequate to meet the needs of the residents.

TRANSPORTATION (Adopted 3/96)

The League supports a balanced, intermodal transportation system interconnected with land use and based on ~~interagency and~~ inter-jurisdictional coordination.

The League supports:

- A multi modal/interconnected transportation system, including but not limited to: highways, mass transit, rail, bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways.
- A transportation system that is consistent with protection of natural resources, including water quality and supply, and air quality.
- A transportation system consistent with conservation of energy resources.
- Full coordination between transportation-related authorities and regional, state and local planning agencies with an emphasis on the interconnection between land use and transportation.
- Some measure of public control exerted on transportation-related authorities in the State of Delaware, regardless of whether they are publicly financed.
- Public education of transportation issues and policy based on workshops, forums, etc.
- Timely participation by the public in decision-making.

SOCIAL POLICY

URBAN HEALTH/JUSTICE SYSTEM

New Update Study:*

A re-evaluation of Delaware’s criminal justice system, and the impact of the current policies and practices on society. (Action will continue to be taken under the current LWVDE position)

*(This re-evaluation study was adopted at the LWVDE Convention 2007 and LWVDE Convention 2013 and is now part of the state positions

URBAN HEALTH:

Support the improvement of the quality of urban life by encouraging citizen input and review of the economic, environmental, and service development and regulation in the towns and cities. (Adopted 4/2004)

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS:

Support for comprehensive needle exchange programs, which also offer education and referrals to appropriate services, as part of a public health effort to reduce the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. (adopted by board 12/05)

The League of Women Voters of New Castle County believes that the possible transmission of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases such as Hepatitis C via the sharing of contaminated needles puts uninfected addicts and their sexual partners at risk and is a public health problem which should be addressed by the State. We believe the strategy of exchanging clean needles for used needles as part of a structured program which includes education and referral services will result in more positive interactions with the addicted population. We also believe that while needle exchange programs may not change or reduce addiction rates, needle exchange programs will accomplish the primary goal of preventing further spread of blood-borne diseases.

We support programs which follow the National HIV Consortium/CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines:

“Well planned needle exchange programs provide the following services:

- Participants are issued an identification card and registered with the program.
- One clean needle/syringe is provided for one dirty needle/syringe
- Dirty needles are collected in proper container for safe disposal
- Service providers are accessible on a regular basis at specific locations

- Information is kept confidential and used only for public health research/education
- Security of the exchange sites and equipment is required
- Referrals are made to appropriate treatment and health & social service providers
- Appropriate levels of staff have expertise in working with injecting drug users
- Education about contracting HIV and other diseases through injection drug use/sexual contact is provided.”

We also support programs to decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases specifically targeted to youth and young adults.

HOUSING

Support for measures to assure equal housing opportunities and decent, affordable housing in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of New Castle County.

The Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas of New Castle County

Support for:

- Programs to provide decent, safe and sanitary housing with the required enforcement measures.
- The belief that all citizens of the incorporated and unincorporated areas of New Castle County should have equal access to housing.
- The concept of publicly-assisted housing the incorporated and unincorporated areas of New Castle County “including scattered sites”.
- Financial aid and counseling with regard to rehabilitation and relocation.
- Enforcement of all housing codes in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of New Castle County.
- Cooperation between New Castle County and the Cities of Wilmington and Newark in solving the complex problems of adequate housing for people with low and moderate incomes.
- Encouraging the investment of private capital in middle-income housing in the City of Wilmington.
- Providing those services which make a neighborhood a desirable place to live.

LIBRARIES

Support for a county-wide public library system, efficiently managed and adequately funded to provide library services for the citizens of New Castle County.

Specific considerations

- Contract libraries should be fiscally responsible and accountable to the county.

PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES (adopted 2/96)

Support policies and funding for public school library media centers that promote their central role in providing equal opportunity for all children to achieve educational excellence.

- Funding to provide library resources should be equally available to all students and staff in public schools in New Castle County.

Specific considerations:

- Each public school library media center should be staffed by at least one certified library media specialist, with clerical assistance.
- Training in the use of new technology should be provided for all public school librarians and staff.
- Public school library media centers should have, or have access to, both print and non-print materials, e.g., books, magazines, data bases, Internet, a variety of media and electronic resources. Resources should be up-to-date, especially in areas where currency is essential, e.g., reference, science, etc.

- A specific percentage of state education funds should be dedicated to public school library media centers each year, preferably through a line item in the state budget.
- Public school library media center collections should support each school's curricula.
- Public school library media centers should be evaluated periodically.
- There should be an ongoing maintenance program for all technology hardware for public school library media centers. Maintenance should not be part of the school library media specialist's duties.
- Policies and practices of public school library media centers should adhere to the concept of intellectual freedom and the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*.

LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan and doctrinal disapproval.
- Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.
- A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.