

LWV Baltimore County: Position Statements (2021)

GOVERNMENT

County Government/Charter

ACTION to support the concept of charter government and measures to make it efficient, effective and responsible (1969)

ACTION to oppose a full time County Council (1969) and a full time Council Chairman 1974)

ACTION to oppose the County Attorney serving as a legal advisor and advisor and legislative draftsman for both the County Council and the County Executive. (1976)

ACTION to support maintaining the present number (7) of County Council Districts (1992) (2002).

ACTION to support retention of the position of People's Counsel (see Land Use Positions, 1992)

Firearms Legislation (1977)

ACTION to strengthen gun control laws, including:

- Requirement of a proficiency tests as part of the procedure for obtaining a hunting license
- Restriction of the availability of handguns (not including the banning of handguns)
- Registration of all handguns including a more effective identification process
- Compilation of more adequate and uniform firearm and firearm crime statistics by the State Police
- Development of a police public relations program to educate the public about firearms, especially gun safety, gun laws, and gun crime and accident statistics

Real Property Assessments and Taxation

(1978)

ACTION to support continued use of the real property tax as a major source of revenue for Baltimore County and including:

- Increased reliance on the piggyback tax to provide relief for real property taxpayers (1992)
- Assessing all property at 100% of market value and opposition to deferring reassessment until property changes ownership
- Improvement of appeals procedures, specifically greater public awareness of procedures and accessibility of assessment data and availability of evening hearings
- Extension of property tax credit program based on income
- Permitting installment payment of property taxes as an available option

Transportation

ACTION to support financing transportation:

- Reduction or elimination of the legal requirement that 50% of mass transit operating costs be financed by fares collected from rides
- Increased funding for mass transit by re-allocating existing Maryland tax revenues and/or levying new taxes
- Maintaining the solvency of the Transportation Trust Fund
- Regional Financing and Cooperation:
 - A regional vision and framework that encompasses land use, economic development, environment protection and transportation
 - Regional efforts to use all appropriate means to reduce vehicle miles traveled and vehicle hours traveled

ACTION to support the role of Baltimore City Government:

- Consolidation of transportation decision making and advocacy in a Mayor's office of transportation
- Developing a cooperative working relationship with the State and with all other local government transportation agencies in the region to achieve better planning and service for increased ridership

- Action to allow transit riders easier job access by:
 - Creating a mass transit system that is efficient, safe and clean, and provides adequate access throughout the Baltimore region
 - Providing tax credits and other incentives to promote mass transit ridership

NATURAL RESOURCES

Land Use

ACTION to support a good system of planning and zoning including:

- The concept of regional and local Master Plans (1967): The basic tenet of development within the (URDL) Urban Rural Demarcation Line (1970)
- The zoning techniques of residential density zoning, planned unit development (PUD) (1970)
- Active cooperation with all jurisdictions comprising the Baltimore Regional Council of Governments to foster a regional perspective (1991)
- Affordable housing opportunities for low-and moderate-income families and individuals throughout Baltimore County near centers of employment, public transportation, community-based support services, and where appropriate, in existing dwellings (1991)
- Retention of coherent agricultural preservation areas (1991)
- A County policy that strikes a balance between an adequate transportation network and protections of the natural environment and the communities (1991)
- Encourage Baltimore County to initiate, with active participation of community members, community-based plans focusing on older communities (1991)
- Rezoning procedure (1974) governed by the principles of:
 - Protection of natural resources and environmentally fragile areas
 - The Guidance, but not exclusion of development
 - Promotion of the best use of the land for the community
 - Defense of the zoning maps by the People’s Counsel of Baltimore County (1974, 1990)
 - Requiring zoning reclassification hearings before the Board of Appeals to be heard “on the record” but zoning variances to

- be originally heard without taking a record (1974)
- Appointment of the Board of Appeals by the Council with a public hearing (1974)
- An accelerated program of land acquisition for parks (1974)
- Open space (1984)
- Continued acquisition of park land by Department of Recreation and Parks
- Program Open Space funds used exclusively for acquisition and development of park land
- Local open space manual implementation, selectively monitored
- Local open space quality selectively monitored

Sludge Management Utilization (1988) and/or disposal of sludge from wastewater treatment plants

ACTION to support:

- Employing a combination of methods for use of sludge including: agricultural utilization, composting with the proper disposal of the end product and marginal land reclamation, provided that the waste water has been pre-treated for the removal of toxic materials
- Use of incineration when it is the only feasible option
- Research leading to technological improvements in sludge utilization and disposal methods
- Opposition to the use of ocean dumping, land filling, co-land filling and entrenchment as methods of sludge disposal (1982)

ACTION to support legislation prohibiting, regulating or restricting discharge of pollutants into the sewer system or waters of Baltimore County by individuals, commerce or industry. (1982)

Solid Waste Management (1971)

ACTION to support improved solid waste management goals and practices in Baltimore County, including:

- Goals of protecting the environment, providing adequate service, shifting emphasis from conventional disposal methods towards increased salvage and recycling, using regional approaches, and using innovative technologies and modern management systems
- De-emphasis on the importance of lowest disposal cost per unit.
- Taking a more active role in removal and disposal of junked cars from private and public property

ACTION to support increased financial aid for, and greater public awareness of, solid waste management problems (See Recycling)

Source Reduction and Recycling (1990)

ACTION to support:

- Primary emphasis on recycling and source reduction.
- Establishment of short-range recycling goals, coupled with longer range source reduction goals
- Payment for disposal of waste, as a general principle, those who generate waste (consumers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers and manufacturers)
- Adequate financing of recycling through a variety of methods (e.g., tipping fee surcharges, single fee taxes, solid waste enterprise fund)
- Government-conducted educational programs to increase public awareness of the need for source reduction and recycling
- Government's active encouragement of markets for recycling and resource conservation businesses, including the use of financial incentives and disincentives for commercial and residential recycling programs
- County-wide curbside collection of recyclables

- Strengthening the Commission's role in its relationship with the Department of Aging by providing Commission input into the budgetary process and periodic, scheduled Commission/Department interaction regarding programs and services

ACTION to support formalizing the selection process for Commission members by

- Requiring resumes and interviews of candidates
- Increasing the number of Commission members to 21, with three persons representing each of the Councilmanic districts
- Requiring a balance between providers of service to elderly consumers and other county agency professionals

ACTION to support:

- maintaining present services
- Expanding services for seniors at risk (i.e., adult day care, in-home and transportation services)
- Continuing to fund services through a combination of local, state and federal monies and encouraging user's fees

ACTION to support giving budget priority to the care, services and personnel of the frail elderly, especially those who are house bound.

SOCIAL POLICY

Alternatives to the War on Drugs (2005)

ACTION to support:

- Continuation of present drug treatment programs focusing on treatment instead of incarceration on every level when evaluated for efficacy;
- Focusing the Government's budget mainly on education and treatment instead of enforcement and punishment;
- Lengthening of drug treatment options to a year or longer;
- Legalizing drugs with various degrees of regulation
- Decriminalizing drugs as a first step
- Allowing addicts to obtain their drugs from licensed medical professionals
- Sentencing adult dealers to prison and giving judges flexibility for first time offenders

Department of Aging (1987)

ACTION to support programs, services, and personnel to meet the needs of Baltimore County Senior Citizens, including:

Economic Development (1981)

ACTION to support economic development in Baltimore County through integrated planning, transportation, site selection assistance, loan guarantees, promotion and giving priority to the above order:

- Policy and program decisions should consider the economic impact of jobs created/lost, tax revenue, potential impact on other development, and cost-benefit analysis
- Interrelated criteria for recruiting businesses should include the availability of land, availability of labor and type of industry. Other considerations should be environmental factors, implementation of the Growth Management Plan, (Master Plan 1998-2000) and targeting already developed areas
- County participation in regional and state economic efforts should continue and include planning, communication, joint marketing activities and participation in specific joint development projects

EDUCATION

Quality of Education (Teaching) Part I (1999)

Affirmation of the following to be the purposes of public Education:

- To prepare students to be responsible citizens and to understand and affirm the democratic values in our society
- To prepare students to be economically self-sufficient
- To prepare students to be life-long learners, appreciative of the arts, knowledgeable about technology and sensitive to cultural and individual differences.

ACTION to support the following to ensure that students in BCPS have well-qualified teachers in their classrooms:

- Strengthening and extension of pre-service training and continued professional development
- Recognition and celebration of teachers of high quality
- Promotion and marketing of the teaching profession with students and the general public
 - Strengthening support services for new and experienced teachers (e.g., technology training, mentoring, programs, etc.)
- Provision of diversity training that engenders respect for academic, socio-economic, and cultural differences among students and staff
- Establishment of high standards for supervision and accountability and adequate staff to ensure that performance actually meets the standards

ACTION to support the following measures in order to motivate accomplished persons to enter and remain in the teaching profession:

- Incentives (ex: small schools and small classes, adequate materials, well maintained physical plants, funds for moving expenses, etc.)
- Salaries competitive with other professions
- Salary supplements (merit pay) for those with high performance ratings and for those who achieve certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

ACTION to support budget priorities of staff, instructional materials and school maintenance

- Sabbaticals and professional conference attendance

- Efforts by BCPS to explore incentives to induce persons in other disciplines to enter the teaching profession
- Finding ways to enable principals to be primarily educational leaders

Quality of Education (Teaching), Part II (2000)

ACTION to support the following g programs that will ensure the Quality of Teaching:

- Promotion of parent involvement in every school
- Promotion of interaction between parents and teachers
- Promotion of requirement by BCPS that all teachers be trained in a variety of strategies to reach and teach students coming from diverse backgrounds
- Provision of the addition of non-teaching support staff for non-teaching activities
- Provision by BCPS of instructional aides in all schools
- Continued implementation of the recommendations of the Minority Achievement Implementation Committee (now called the Diversity and Achievement Steering Committee) as well as the recommendations for systemic change listed in the State Minority report, "Minority Achievement in Maryland"
- Inclusion of all "stakeholders" in any surveys regarding special education—not just parents and teachers of special education students
- Funding and development of pre-school education
- Greater coordination and cooperation between BCPS and DSS in improving the quality of day care programs
- Increased compensation in order to recruit and retain high quality teachers
 - Provision of teachers of high quality to provide remediation, acceleration and enrichment programs in elementary schools with high percentages of low achieving students

Early Childhood Education (2002)

ACTION to support the following early childhood education initiatives:

- Provision by BCPS of parent education and assistance with pre-literacy and enrichment activities to families in greatest need
- Provision by BCPS of Pre-K education for 4-year-olds from disadvantaged families and those with special

needs with an ultimate goal of provision of pre-K for all children

- Funding of pre-K and all-day kindergarten with federal, state and local financing, preferably from general revenues

The Principalship (2005)

Affirmation of the following principles: The principal's role is key to a well-functioning school and sets the tone for its mission to successfully educate all of the students. The principal is the chief administrator of his/her school and his/her main responsibility is that of Instructional Leader.

ACTION to support the following:

- Provision of discretionary funding that would allow the principal to hire a person to supervise tasks which are not directly instructional in nature
- Encouragement of BCPS to expand its training program for potential principals to include all of the requirements necessary to become a full principal and to include spending part of that training in "challenging" schools and with an emphasis on human relations
- Encouragement of BCPS to put in place mechanism for teachers to evaluate the principal as part of the teacher's overall evaluation

ACTION to support principal evaluation procedures which include appropriate input by teachers and parents

Safe Schools/Safe Communities (1996)

ACTION to support the following:

- A fair, equitable, consistent discipline code and suspension policy in the Baltimore County Public Schools (frequently disseminated to parents and students), with emphasis on the need for removal of the most chronically disruptive students from the regular day school setting to a separate, alternative setting with appropriate curriculum, and for the establishment of in-school detention programs where suitable and feasible.
- Increased and enhanced before and after-school programs
- Increased cooperation between BCPS and other government agencies dealing with children's welfare
- Provision of funding, public and private, as needed to create and maintain safe schools and safe communities with emphasis on prevention and early intervention

Charter Schools (1998):

The League of Women Voters of Baltimore County neither supports nor opposes Charter Schools but does support specific criteria which should be implemented should Charter Schools be permitted in Baltimore County.

Definition: Charter Schools are public schools, non-profit and non-sectarian, which offer alternative approaches to education and are exempted from certain rules and regulations, except those related to health, safety, civil rights, special education, criminal background check and financial disclosure, in exchange for accountability after a specified length of time. Common characteristics are; small size, (usually fewer than 300 students); relative degree of autonomy over decisions regarding curriculum, staffing, and budget; significant parent involvement; and innovative programs.

CRITERIA:

- Parents, teachers, institutions of higher education, community agencies and existing public schools should be free to apply to form charter schools. However, Boards of Trustees of Charter Schools may hire for-profit companies for specific services (e.g., tutoring, accounting, janitorial help).
- Federal moneys, foundations, businesses and other agencies can supply start-up funds. For operating expenses, customary funding from local, state and federal sources should flow to charter schools.
- State certification for a majority of the teachers is important. Strengthening the certification process for charter schoolteachers, as well as other public school teachers, along with continuous staff development is recommended.
- Charter School Contracts should be reviewed frequently (e.g., one year, followed by contracts for three to five years).
- Students desiring to attend should be admitted using a lottery system.
 - Students should take customary tests in Maryland. The charter school, itself, should be held accountable for student success, based on its curriculum plan, after three years.
- Charter schools should be open to non-intrusive visits from citizens who have scheduled appointments. There should be open disclosure of finances, including annual audits, which are reported to education boards and the public.
- The State Board should not limit the number of charter schools.

- All governing and advisory boards and councils for charter schools should include lay citizens.
- Transportation of students to charter schools should be addressed.
- Monitoring and accountability are crucial for the success of charter schools—by local and state boards or by bodies appointed by them to do so.

Selection of Board of Education Members (2014)

SUPPORT for change to either a fully elected or a hybrid system (some elected/some appointed) of selection of members of the Board of Education.

SUPPORT for a staggered system of election so that the terms of all Board members would not end at the same time thus providing continuity.

SUPPORT for a four-year term of office.

SUPPORT for candidates running on a non-partisan basis.

SUPPORT for the requirement that no person serve who has a conflict of interest.

If there should be a hybrid system of selection:

SUPPORT for a requirement that the governor use his/her appointments to ensure diversity on the Board.

HEALTH CARE (1976)

ACTION to support an adequate community resource system, including:

- Development of a comprehensive health plan for Baltimore County, based on a thorough assessment of community needs, present and future. (1994)
- Expansion of administrative service, especially in the Division of Budget and Fiscal Control, Division of Statistical Services, and Division of Program Planning, Research and Development. (1974, 1988)
- An expanded health education program with recommended staff for implementation. (1976)
- More continuous in-service training. (1974)
- Programs such as pre-natal, well-child and mental health clinics, psychiatric day care centers and expanded family planning services. (1972, 1988)
- Increasing environmental health staff.

HOUSING

ACTION to support the LWVUS position of equal opportunity for all, with emphasis on housing for low- and moderate-income families (1968)

ACTION to support the local League Land Use position of affordable housing opportunities for low- and -moderate income families and individuals throughout Baltimore County near centers of employment, public transportation, and community-based support services, and where appropriate, in existing dwelling (1991)

ACTION to support the Basic Human Needs position of increasing the current local supplement for all assistance recipients who currently receive a supplement; creation of additional shelters through funding support by the county, but operation of shelters by private, non-profit groups (1988)

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (HRC) (1989)

ACTION to support a strong Commission under our national human relations position of equal rights for all, including:

- An HRC as a separate entity with adequate budget and staff with an executive director working solely for the Commission, with the board having a voice in the selection
- Board appointed by the County executive from a list compiled by community organizations and representing geographic areas and a balance of racial, ethnic and community interests.

JOB RETRAINING (1984, 1990)

ACTION to support retraining of dislocated workers which should be planned for in advance and occur on an ongoing basis, including:

- Adequate funding of trainees and the training institutions by the federal government with supplemental and/or stop gap funding by state and local government as needed, and with expertise and equipment provided by private industry
- Enrollment of trainees in training institutions by the federal government with input from state government, private industry and Private Industry Council (PIC).
- Identification of future job needs by private industry, with collection and dissemination of lists of available jobs as all levels of government.
- Shared responsibility for placement of newly trained workers by local government, private industry, and the training institutions.

MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS (1988)

ACTION to support:

- increasing the current local supplement for all assistance recipients who currently receive a supplement
- creation of shelters through funding support by the County, but operation by private, non-profit groups.

SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE (SACC)

(1985, 1990, 1992)

ACTION to support:

- assumption by Baltimore County of the role of Facilitator for a diverse range of SACC services, including regulation, child care information and referral, planning, training and technical assistance
- designation of SACC services as second in priority for use of school facilities
- assumption of funding for SACC programs by parents and business community with government involved only for low-income families on a sliding scale.

