

PROGRAM PLANNING 2021-2022

INTRODUCTION: Program planning meetings are the means by which members of the League of Women Voters (LWV) at all levels decide the program for a calendar year. And although local Leagues often adopt study and action issues particular to their communities, all levels of the League ultimately “speak in one voice” using common terminology and agreeing on major issues. Here is some of the language that is consistent across all League levels.

WHAT IS THE LEAGUE’S MISSION? The League of Women Voters, “a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.”

WHAT IS MEANT BY PROGRAM? The League’s program is derived from the positions it takes on important public policy issues. The program empowers the League to educate, advocate, and take action, thus fulfilling its mission.

WHAT ARE LEAGUE POSITIONS? The League—at all levels—systematically develops positions on public policy issues of importance to our members and to the community. Members identify issues for study, create study committees, write Fact Sheets, develop specific statements around the issue and ask members to reach consensus on the statements. These statements, agreed to by the members, then become public policy positions and a part of the League program.

WHAT IS PROGRAM PLANNING? Program planning 1) reviews and determines whether to retain, edit or drop current positions; 2) decides whether to readopt current studies and/or adopt new studies; and 3) identifies topics for future activities, such as topics for Discussion Groups, Trending Topics or other areas that can lead to an activity but do not require a study committee.

PROGRAM PLANNING FOR LWVMC: Program Planning is the traditional January meeting where Montgomery County League of Women Voters (LWVMC) members cast a critical eye on the policy positions that make up the current program and decide whether to retain these positions as a basis for the subsequent year’s education, advocacy and action. Members also have an opportunity to offer ideas for new studies on issues the League has not considered or suggest that “old studies” be revisited with the intention of updating positions. After the Program Planning meetings, the recommendations on positions and studies go to the LWVMC Board, which then decides what to put forward for member adoption at the annual meeting in the spring. This year at Program Planning, in addition to LWVMC positions and studies, we will review League of Women Voters Maryland (LWVMD) and League of Women Voters National Capital Area (LWVNCA) positions. We also have the option of recommending new studies to LWVMD and LWVNCA.

AGENDA

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| 45 minutes | Review Policy Positions: Retain, Edit, or Drop
A. LWVMC Positions
B. LWVNCA Positions
C. LWVMD Positions |
| 25 minutes | Re-adopt Current Studies; Propose New Studies
A. LWVMC Studies to Readopt or Propose
B. LWVNCA Studies to Propose
C. LWVMD Studies to Propose |
| 20 minutes | Plan Future Activities |

Definition of Terms related to Positions:

- *Retain/keep:* the position should remain as is.
- *Edit:* the position needs minor wording changes to improve the clarity of the position.
- *Drop:* the position should be deleted because it is no longer relevant or no longer supported.

Definition of Terms related to Studies:

- *Adopt:* a new study should be conducted.
- *Re-adopt:* a current study should be continued.
- *Informational update:* a new study is not needed but members should receive information on new developments through Discussion Group presentations and/or newsletter articles

Evaluation Criteria for New and Continuing Studies:

- Does the League already have a position?
- Do we need to update or revise any positions?
- Is government action needed? Possible? Likely?
- Is the study proposed at the right League level? At what government level should action be taken?
- Is the issue timely? Why? Will League involvement have an impact?
- Are members interested in working on a study? Do we have a leader for the study? Will new members be interested?

REVIEW OF LWVMC POSITIONS: RETAIN, EDIT OR DROP

LWVMC has developed positions on the 19 issues listed below; the positions are described in greater detail in the Member Handbook on pages 23-41. Please **review them at** https://www.lwvmocomd.org/member_handbook

Agricultural Policy: We support the preservation of agricultural lands through various easement measures and other means. (page 23)

Budget Process: We support continued improvement of Montgomery County budget procedures and budget documents with emphasis on increasing citizen understanding and input. (page 24)

Charter & County Government: We support the continuation of the charter form of government for Montgomery County with improvements to ensure responsive and responsible government. (page 25)

Child Care: In order to ensure a range of high quality child care and early education programs accessible to all children of low and moderate-income families, we support publicly funded incentives for child care providers; adequate county subsidies for families, allowing parents to continue working and afford quality child care; enhancement and accreditation services, including early childhood mental health consultation; emphasizing all day programs and encouraging employers to have family leave policies. (page 26)

Children's Services: We support a comprehensive range of child-centered services to ensure all children a chance to grow toward stable productive adulthood. (page 26)

Corrections: We support a rehabilitative correctional system in Montgomery County for adults and juveniles. (page 27)

Economic Development: We support the development and implementation of an Economic Development strategy for Montgomery County. (page 28)

Education: We support quality public education and equal educational opportunity for all. (page 29)

Elderly: We support a wide range of services and facilities to meet the needs of the elderly in Montgomery County. (page 31)

Election Process: We support election systems that produce results that reflect community sentiment, increase voter participation and are easy to understand and implement. We support

elections being decided by a majority of participating voters using a system in which voters rank the candidates (Ranked Choice Voting/Instant Runoff). (page 32)

Fire & Rescue Services: We support fire and rescue services that protect the health and safety of Montgomery County residents. (page 33)

Health Care: We support the improvement of public health services and facilities and access to care for all Montgomery County residents. (page 34)

Housing & Public Accommodations: We support Montgomery County policies and programs to increase the supply of affordable housing, to prevent discrimination in housing and public accommodations and to meet the needs of the homeless. (page 36)

Land Use Planning: We support comprehensive long-range planning for Montgomery County and the Washington Metropolitan Area. (page 38)

Library Services: We support county libraries as a basic community service that should be publicly funded. (page 39)

Liquor Control: We support fully or partially privatizing Montgomery County's direct role in the wholesale and retail sale of beer, wine, and liquor and improving the efficiency of those operations. (page 40)

Local Revenue: We support policies to strengthen the fiscal structure of Montgomery County. (page 40)

Police Services: We support pro-active/preventive community policing in Montgomery County. (page 40)

Transportation: We support a balanced system of transportation, transportation services, transportation information and solutions to current and future county transportation needs. (page 41)

RECOMMENDATIONS

In preparation for the January Program Planning meeting, committee chairs or committee members who worked on these 19 issues were asked to recommend whether to edit, retain or drop the current positions. Their recommendations are listed here:

Edit:

1. ELECTION PROCESS

Election Equipment

6. We believe all newly acquired voting equipment (hardware and software) for use in Montgomery County should allow alternative ways of casting and counting ballots and be usable for all county and municipal elections. ~~(NOTE: In 2008, this includes support of Ranked Choice/ Instant Runoff Voting and Single Transferable Voting for Takoma Park city elections.)~~ (Delete "NOTE" information in the parenthesis)

2. HOUSING & PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION

Current: 1. g. strict enforcement of housing codes with shift to civil penalties
edit by adding "and any other measures to assure habitability"

With change: **1.g strict enforcement of housing codes with shift to civil penalties and any other measures to assure habitability**

Current: 2. Accessory Apartments

edit by adding the phrase "Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)":

With change: **2. Accessory Apartments/Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

3. TRANSPORTATION

Current: 4. a) building a transit line, the light rail Purple Line, on a right-of-way generally south of the Beltway—funding priority.

With change: 4. a) completing a transit line, the light rail Purple Line, on a right-of-way generally south of the Beltway—funding priority.
(Substitute "completing" for "building")

Retain:

Agricultural Policy	Elderly
Budget Process	Fire & Rescue Services
Charter & County Government	Health Care
Child Care	Land Use Planning
Children's Services	Library Services
Corrections	Liquor Control
Economic Development	Local Revenue
Education	Police Services

Drop:

None

MOTIONS NEEDED

- 1) Motion to edit positions as proposed by committee chairs or members knowledgeable about the position.
- 2) Motion to retain all positions, as amended.

REVIEW OF LWNCA POSITION: RETAIN, EDIT OR DROP

LWNCA, a consortium of Leagues located in and near Washington D.C, has developed positions on the nine issues listed below. The issues are detailed in the Member Handbook on pages 55-59. Please **review them at** https://www.lwvcomd.org/member_handbook.

Airports: We support a balanced use of the three major metropolitan Washington airports, including limitations on the use of DCA. (page 56)

Beltway Safety: We support measures to increase safety, control speeding, prevent unsafe driving, etc., on the Capital Beltway and feeder roads. (page 56)

Comprehensive Health Planning: We support improving healthcare regionwide, including government regulation, regional coordination, increased availability and improved care for the elderly. (page 56)

Controlled Substances: We support the legal use of marijuana and heroin for medicinal purposes through legislation and a focus on education and treatment. (page 56)

D.C. Financing: We support the budget autonomy of the District of Columbia. This includes eliminating the annual Congressional D.C. appropriations budget-approval process and the creation of new legislation that determines an annual, predictable federal payment. (page 57)

Land Use/Housing: We support a coordinated, comprehensive approach to housing in the Washington Metropolitan area. (page 57)

Regional Governance: We support strengthening the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to improve cooperation in regional planning. (page 57)

Transportation: We support public transportation for all. In pursuit of this we support a coordinated public transportation system, regional integration and an informed and involved public. (page 58)

Water Resources: We support regional planning and coordination of our water resources to ensure a safe and adequate supply along with improved wastewater treatment management. (page 59)

Motions Needed

- 1) Motion to edit or drop positions (if any)
- 2) Motion to retain positions, as amended.

REVIEW OF LWVMD POSITIONS: RETAIN, EDIT OR DROP

These positions have been adopted by the LWVMD. When noted by LWVMD, the dates of adoption are in parentheses. To read the complete positions, go to <https://www.lwvmd.org/positions>.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

Administration of Justice: Action to secure an effective, nonpartisan judiciary and to promote fair and appropriate sentencing, including the abolition of the death penalty; and a correctional system, including probation and other alternatives to incarceration, that protects society and prepares offenders for successful reintegration into the community. Action to support access by indigent criminal defendants to legal counsel at every decisional stage of the judicial process, including bail hearings. (1963, 1964, 1967, 1970, 1987, 1989, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)

Election Process: Action to assure an election system that is representative, feasible to implement and increases voter participation, as well as equitable, accessible, fiscally responsible, accountable and enforceable. Action to support same day registration. Action to assure fair campaigns and elections. Action to institute elections to fill vacancies in the General Assembly. Action to support more open primary elections and taxpayer-funded primary elections for all recognized parties. Action to support a mix of single and multi-member legislative districts and coterminous boundaries. Action to oppose term limits for members of the General Assembly. Opposition to a requirement for uniform voting systems unless funded by the state. (1972, 1985, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018)

Ethics: LWVMD has never specifically studied governmental ethics. We have, however, strongly supported (in accordance with the LWVUS Principles and positions) legislation and administrative action which will make government more responsive and accountable to the voters, such as open meetings, accessibility of records to the public, and a code of ethics for government office holders and officials.

Firearms Control: Action to strengthen gun control laws. (1991)

Fiscal Policy: Action to promote an equitable and efficient fiscal structure for Maryland and to improve the fiscal relationships between the state and its political subdivisions. Action to support or oppose proposed changes to Maryland's revenue structure, using certain principles to analyze and evaluate the proposed changes. Action to increase the budgetary authority of the legislature and to achieve a more effective budget process. (1976, 1981, 1999, 2004)

Local Government: Action to support county home rule, with preference for charter. (1967, 1983, 1985)

Redistricting: Action to assure a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation in the state legislature and House of Representatives with maximum opportunity for public scrutiny. (2004)

State Constitution: Action to secure a constitution that is clear, concise and confined to fundamentals. (1962)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Coal: Action to oppose the granting of eminent domain for, and the construction of, a coal slurry pipeline through Maryland. (1986) Action to support the collection of taxes and fees from the coal industry for costs to the public resulting from the mining of Maryland coal. (1987) Action to oppose strip mining on slopes steeper than 20 degrees. (1993)

Climate Change: Action on climate change is based on the LWVUS position to support comprehensive legislation to control climate change, and support for predominant reliance on renewable resources. These positions can be found at: https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/impact_on_issues_2016-2018_natural_resources.pdf

Hazardous Waste Management: Action to promote the environmentally sound management of hazardous waste and to educate the public on safe disposal procedures. (1984)

Land Use/Growth Management: Action to encourage the State to establish goals, guidelines, and standards for land use, with local implementation of land use policies. (1975, 1979, 1991)

Solid Waste Management: Action to promote informed decisions affecting solid waste management. (1995)

Transportation: Action to support an integrated transportation system and mass transit systems which are efficient, safe, clean and accessible. Support for adequate and equitable funding and cooperative regional programs is necessary to achieve these goals. (2002)

SOCIAL POLICY

The League of Women Voters supports Social Policies that secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all, and that promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

Adult Literacy: Action to ensure availability of free or low cost basic English language instruction for adult Maryland residents who are not proficient in reading, writing, speaking and understanding English. (2009)

Children's Services: Action to support a comprehensive range of child-centered services to ensure all children a chance to grow toward stable, productive adulthood. (1995)

Death With Dignity: State laws should grant the option for a terminally ill person to request medical assistance from a relevant, licensed physician to end one's life.

Domestic Violence: Action to support preventing initial and repeat occurrences of violence against spouses, domestic partners, the elderly, and children. - Action to support a strong statewide response to violence that is integrated, interdisciplinary, and adequately funded, involving all segments of the law-enforcement and judicial systems, the medical community, the schools, social services, animal care and control agencies, and the private sector, with a primary focus on the safety of victims. (2000)

Drug and Controlled Substance Abuse, Policies and Laws in Maryland: Action to legalize the use of marijuana for any use, including medicinal, subject to restrictions on production and distribution. (2012)

Drunk Driving: Action to promote strong governmental measures and educational programs to address the problem of the drinking driver. (1983 and 2001)

Education: Action to support measures which recognize the primary responsibility for funding public elementary and secondary education lies with the state. (1972, 1975) Action to support the state aiding local school systems in attracting and retaining competent teachers. (1989) Action to oppose using public funding for vouchers to enable parents to send their children to private elementary and secondary schools. (2001) Action to encourage the inclusion of certain criteria in any legislation or regulations governing the establishment of Public Charter Schools. (2001) Action to ensure students have an opportunity to pass high school graduation tests. (2005) Opposed BOOST scholarship program for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch to attend private and religious schools that currently receive state funding for computers and textbooks (2018)

Marriage/Civil Union Equality: Action to ensure that Maryland law does not discriminate in its recognition of all marriages/civil unions on the basis of gender or religious definitions of marriage. (2007)

Health Care and Health Care Appeals: Action to ensure a health care appeals system which protects patients, makes insurers accountable and objectively addresses patients' concerns. (1999)

Housing: Action to develop a state housing policy responsive to the need for more affordable housing and to clarify landlord/tenant relationships. (1982, 1983)

Meeting Basic Human Needs: Relied on LWVUS positions. One of the goals of social policy should be to reduce poverty and promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families; Increasing emphasis on cash assistance; Benefit levels should be sufficient to provide adequate food; and Pay equity.

Motions Needed

- 1) Motion to edit or drop positions (if any)
- 2) Motion to retain all positions, as amended.

**TOPICS FOR STUDY: READOPT CURRENT STUDIES,
RECOMMEND NEW STUDIES**

A. LWVMC Topics for Study

1. Current studies recommended for readoption

- a. Agriculture Committee—will gather facts about the agritourism study and the various ways that the Agricultural Reserve contributes to the county's economy, environment and lifestyle.
- b. Aging in Montgomery County—will identify those issues impacting all stages of aging from active and working seniors to the more vulnerable senior populations. In Montgomery County, the number of people over 65 is projected to more than double between 2010 and 2040, creating a need by the county's organizations, employers and the local government to acknowledge the large population of citizens at various stages of older age with very different lifestyles and needs. Current policies may need to be updated and new policies developed. The committee will review the current "elderly" policy positions and identify other areas that especially pertain to women, such as how the aging population in the county is segmented, the level of need for social safety nets for the county's aging population, innovative housing concepts and aging-in-place opportunities, existing and needed local services, and potential legislation to fill gaps.
- c. Revenue Study—a study of Montgomery County's existing and potential revenue sources, including taxes and fees (revenue structure) When this study was adopted at the 2020 annual meeting, we recognized that our current Local Revenue positions were old (having been adopted in 1970 and 1991) and that we should update our knowledge about the county's revenue structure in order to present informed testimony as the county sought new revenue to meet State requirements for increased education funding. Since then, the county charter has been amended to change how the property tax is calculated and the COVID 19 pandemic has created additional stresses on the county's budget (less revenue, more needs). We may present information at meetings this spring and would like to extend our study for a year to get a better sense of the county's revenue status before seeking consensus.

2. Topics suggested for new studies or other activity

- a. New Studies
 - i. Fire & Rescue—a study committee should be formed to conduct a study of the fire and rescue services in the county.
 - ii. Police Services—a study committee should be formed to review and possibly revamp League positions on Police Services as well as examine how the public safety of Montgomery County residents can be improved with changes to policing practices.
- b. Other Activity (Trending Topics, Discussion Groups, etc.)
 - iii. Police Services—Who polices Montgomery County? Recommendation is to form a short-term group to put together an informational meeting that includes an update on the status of policing in the county.
 - iv. Civic Education Action—TBD

B. LWNCA Topics Suggested for Studies (discussion)

C. LWVMD Topics Suggested for Studies (discussion)

DISCUSSION: PLANNING FOR FUTURE ACTION

1. What other issues should be considered for programs in the coming year? “Programs” could include discussion groups, trending topics or other type of activity.
2. How can LWVMC use its positions to monitor, participate and advocate in county government?
Examples of current approaches used include:
 - Observer Corps
 - Action/Testimony
 - Committee Monitoring

This Fact Sheet was compiled by Program Planning Co-Chairs, Marcia Kingman and Linda Kohn.