

Spousal Rape

- Redefinition of rape to include spousal rape

III. SOCIAL POLICY/ HUMAN RESOURCES

ACTION TO ACHIEVE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL; TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION AND POVERTY; AND TO PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS TO HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, QUALITY EDUCATION, AND HEALTH CARE IN TEXAS WHICH WOULD INCLUDE

Child Abuse and Neglect

- Legislation, policies, services, and programs to protect children from abuse and neglect in their families and homes, including adequate funding and provisions for...
 - prevention programs
 - investigative and reporting procedures
 - appropriate correctional measures and counseling

Child Care

- Development and implementation of policies, legislation, and programs that address the needs of all Texas children and families for accessible, affordable, quality child care

Child Support Enforcement

- Equitable and efficient means of enforcing court orders for child support

Domestic Violence

- Adequate funding for programs that work to eliminate the incidence of domestic violence and to alleviate its effects
- Appropriate penalties for offenders
- Easier access to protective orders
- Improved enforcement, administrative procedures, and training for criminal justice professionals
- Financial compensation to victims from their abusers
- Improved accessibility to support services

Equal Opportunity/Income Assistance

- Removal of the ceiling on income assistance spending from the state constitution
- Provision by the state of supportive services, such as health care, child care, family planning, legal aid, and job training for income assistance recipients
- Development of an effective human relations commission

Health Care for the Medically Indigent

- Access to basic health care services by persons at risk of medical indigency with special attention to children of low-income families, and persons of low income who are elderly, pregnant, or mentally ill

Health Care for Older Texans

- Creation of a comprehensive health care system for older Texans that ensures a seamless continuum of quality of care
- Access that includes networks that provide consistent information about publicly funded health care programs and eligibility requirements and affordable programs to provide adequate transportation
- Care that includes integration of healthcare service with individual healthcare plans and a continuum of services from screening to long-term and hospice care; programs that address limitation to access in rural and other medically underserved areas for dentistry, vision and hearing services, mental health and long term care; access to prescription drugs not limited by ability to pay
- Quality care that includes adoption and strict enforcement of high standards for all long term care; programs to improve training, pay, benefits and retention of personnel engaged in planning, regulation and delivery of care; sufficient funding to support comprehensive care for older adults

Immigration

- Adequate funding for local, public and private programs that meet the special needs of immigrant populations
- Development and utilization of an immigration status verification system that protects privacy and ensures accuracy

Post-Divorce Payments

- Enabling courts to award post-divorce (spousal maintenance) payments when appropriate

Services for the Seriously Mentally Ill

- Access to services designed to help people who are seriously mentally ill reach and maintain an optimal level of functioning in the least restrictive environment

IV. NATURAL RESOURCES

ACTION TO ACHIEVE CONSERVATION, PROTECTION, AND JUDICIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES WHICH WOULD INCLUDE

Air

- State control of air pollution through...
 - power to set and enforce standards stricter than those required by the federal government and laws allowing local and regional governments to set and enforce standards stricter than those of the state
 - adequate funding for research, planning, and enforcement
 - citizen involvement in the rulemaking and enforcement process

Land Use

- State comprehensive land use policy to provide for the orderly development of the state through...
 - use according to carrying capacity and development compatible with availability of essential natural resources
 - preservation of agricultural lands, desirable open space, and desirable existing buildings and infrastructure with preferential tax treatment for each
 - a coordinated system of land use management, including the establishment of a state land use agency
 - identification and protection of areas of particular significance and rare or fragile ecosystems

Transportation

- A transportation system to move people and goods in a variety of transportation modes through...
 - emphasis on increased public transportations services and other viable alternatives
 - systems that are efficient, convenient, and cost effective
 - services for all segments of the population and diverse geographic needs
 - minimization of harmful effects to the environment and integration with land use
 - expansion of existing routes to include added passenger rail service and expanded freight rail lines

Water

- Comprehensive long-range state water planning with emphasis on...
 - social, economic, environmental, and land use implications
 - development of adequate supplies by ecologically and financially sound means
 - conservation and reuse of land and fragile ecosystem protection
- Protection, conservation, and development of groundwater as an integral part of the comprehensive state water plan for management that would...
 - maintain quality and protect against contamination
 - assure long-term productivity and protect against subsidence and spring flow reduction
 - include full public consideration of management options
 - assure coordination and adequate funding

The League of Women Voters of Texas may also act at the state level under positions taken by the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS).

WE SUPPORT

Summary of State Advocacy 2008-2010

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government and influences policy through education and advocacy.

Whatever the issue, the League of Women Voters believes that government policy, programs, and performance must meet these criteria:

- Well-defined channels for citizen participation and review
- Coordination among agencies and levels of government
- Adequate financing
- Effective enforcement
- Competent personnel with clear responsibilities



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We Support summarizes League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) program positions reached by statewide member study and agreement. The positions are **not** in order by priority.

I. GOVERNMENT

ACTION TO ACHIEVE AN EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE, AND RESPONSIVE STATE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION AND LEGISLATIVE ACTION WHICH WOULD INCLUDE

Constitutional Revision

- Support of revision of the Texas Constitution to make it a framework of basic law

Election Laws and Voting Rights

- Measures to ensure every citizen’s right to vote
- Improved procedures for registration of voters
- Uniformly enforced election procedures, clearly stated election laws that facilitate citizen participation, and the right to a secret ballot
- Election laws that facilitate citizen participation and voter convenience
- consolidation of polling places when appropriate
- reduction of the number of days between primary and general elections

Executive, Legislative, Judicial

- Measures to increase the effectiveness of the executive department and the efficiency and responsiveness of the legislature
- Selection of judges for the Texas Supreme Court, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, and the Appeals Courts with nomination by a diverse, representative, and nonpartisan commission and appointment for a specific term, or who are appointed by the Governor, followed by an unlimited number of periodic elections; selection, if by election, should be nonpartisan

Financing State Government

- Constitutional and statutory provisions for flexibility within a coordinated finance structure, equitable taxation, and increased accountability including
- removing from the constitution and making statutory the provisions for dedicated funds, ad valorem tax exemptions, and dollar amount of debt limitations
- an equitable system of taxation that assures adequate revenues and is easily administered
- budget execution as the joint responsibility of the executive and legislative branches of the state government

Intestacy

- Maintenance of equitable state intestacy laws

Political Campaign Process

- Campaign finance laws and practices that eliminate excessive and/or inappropriate spending including...
 - limits on amounts of campaign contributions to a candidate from individuals and PACs and on total contributions a candidate may accept
 - limits on the time during which a candidate may accept contributions
 - limits on the amount a candidate may spend to get elected
 - limits on the contributions that can be accepted by political parties and enforcement of regulations governing their use
- public financing for state elected offices
- In order to receive public funding candidates would agree to private contribution limits and campaign spending
- Laws, practices, and policies governing political campaigns which protect citizens’ right to know, strengthen accountability, combat corruption and undue influence, and promote fairness and accuracy and full, timely disclosure through electronic filing, including...
 - strengthened financial disclosures and reporting requirements for candidates and lobbyists.
 - a fairness code governing the conduct of individuals and groups engaged in election campaigns
 - media responsibility to encourage and accurately report candidate discussion of issues
 - candidates’ responsibility to articulate positions on issues and control the conduct of their campaigns
 - voluntary limits on campaign spending

Public School Finance

- Achievement of a public school finance system that provides an equitable distribution of funds and equity to the taxpayer including
 - a sufficient level of state support to Texas public schools to ensure that all children receive an education suited to their needs
 - equity achieved by a weighted approach to distributing funds; equalization aid that incorporates a guaranteed tax base yield; and state assistance for essential construction or rebuilding
 - opposition to the voucher system approach, as well as choice options that do not promote racial integration and/or equal access to quality education

Public School Testing and Accountability

Measures to achieve state-mandated standardized achievement tests that measure individual mastery and proficiency, are used as a diagnostic tool to measure growth and progress over time, and are developed by Texas educators who are experts in their fields. Also

- a curriculum that provides academic rigor and is developed with input from educators, the public, business groups and elected and appointed officials who represent the state’s diverse population
- an accountability system that identifies academic achievement and gaps in performance in subgroups but is not used to establish school or district ratings or to close schools
- equitable opportunity for academic achievement for all students, and
- support for teachers in the mandated testing environment

Redistricting

- Measures to achieve an effective method for drawing boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts through legislative and constitutional revision including...
 - creation of a commission with the initial responsibility of formulating a redistricting plan
 - creation of a special legislative session called for the sole purpose of redistricting if a commission is not initially responsible
 - criteria for redistricting based on equal population and single member contiguous districts
 - consideration given to ensuring that districts be compact, that they coincide with boundaries of local political subdivisions, and that they do not dilute the voting strength of minorities

State and Local Relations

- More flexible structures and adequate powers at the local level
- Comprehensive regional state planning, including regional councils

II. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

ACTION TO ACHIEVE AN EQUITABLE SYSTEM OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN TEXAS FOR ADULTS AND JUVENILES WHICH WOULD INCLUDE

Criminal Justice

- Expansion of pretrial diversion programs, institution of an adequately funded public defender system, and improvements in the bail bond system
- Improvement in minimum training requirements and in-service programs for law enforcement personnel

- Revision of the Penal Code to reduce disparity of sentences and to increase sentencing options
- Elimination of jury sentencing except in capital cases
- Establishment of a broad range of adequately funded community corrections programs for probationers and parolees
- Provision of a secure environment for prison inmates; adequate educational opportunities; access to health care; programs to assist inmates in the transition to the free world; compensation to inmates for their labor
- Passage of state laws which prohibit wiretapping
- Reform of the capital punishment system in Texas with the following measures
 - prohibit the execution of the mentally retarded, mentally ill, and juveniles under the age of 18 at the time the crime was committed
 - observe the provisions of the Vienna Convention by providing foreign nationals access to consular officials from their native countries
 - provide the option of life without parole, in addition to execution and life imprisonment, to juries in capital cases
 - require the Board of Pardons and Paroles to hold open meetings and to give explanations for its decisions
 - establish a moratorium on all executions in Texas while an official study of the capital punishment system is conducted

Drug Laws and Policies

- Consideration of substance abuse and drug addiction as public health issues with the following preventive measures
 - promote educational programs aimed at keeping children from using drugs
 - provide public education programs directed to adults
 - implement sterile needle and syringe exchange programs to prevent blood-borne diseases
 - promote drug treatment programs as an alternative to incarceration
 - remove criminal penalties for cannabis when recommended by a physician

Juvenile Justice

- Measures to ensure an effective state juvenile justice system in which the main goal is rehabilitation, providing access to adequate and appropriate rehabilitation services and programs to every juvenile offender
- Implementation of a comprehensive intervention strategy to deal effectively with juvenile violence and delinquency
- Implementation of programs and policies to prevent juvenile violence and crime
- An adequate level of funding to accomplish these goals, with highest priority given to prevention, followed by intervention, then corrections