

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ORANGE COUNTY ACTION AND STUDY PROGRAM 2005-2006

The Program of the League of Women Voters of Orange County consists of action to implement general League principles, and action and study on governmental issues chosen by the membership. Its particular focus is government activities at the county level. The LWVOC was formed in 1966 and has adopted the following positions on government issues of specific concern to Orange County. These positions were developed by member study of an issue on a countywide basis, and by adoption by the LWVOC of a position statement developed by one or more member local Leagues.

ISSUES FOR EMPHASIS - 2005

Current Issue for Emphasis

Know Your County - Review of the governmental structure, General Plan and budget of Orange County.

A study committee comprised of members of the four local Leagues will follow the guidelines in the LWVUS publication "Know Your County". The relationships to California state government will be explored. At least one General Meeting will be held for League members. Local Leagues will be encouraged to hold at least two local membership meetings to explore members' concerns regarding Orange County Government and to discuss the information provided by the committee. Finally, the committee will issue a report for League members and members of the public, which will include how county government is structured and how county services are funded.

Continuing Issues for Emphasis:

Natural Resources and Land Use. Will focus on the Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) planning process and its effect on future regional planning in Orange County; and will continue using the O.C. General Plan Elements for information on Land Use, Housing, Parks and Recreation, Resources, Transportation and Growth Management.

Action on County Welfare Reform Programs. Monitoring effectiveness of the "safety net" through membership in Partners for Responsible Public Policy and educating the public on welfare reform issues.

Santa Ana River Project Authority has pending a feasibility study on SARI (Santa Ana River Interceptor) Line modifications, which may affect ocean outfall and possible beach pollution, waste disposal treatment and water supply for the Groundwater Replenishment Program. A League committee will monitor the feasibility study, collect information on the proposals and provide regular updates to the ILO Board and to local Leagues. Committee members will attend public information meetings, request to be on email lists for progress reports, collect printed data as presented by study coordinators and assemble information from community sources. Data will include purpose, methods and timeline for the study, conclusions the study reaches, and how these conclusions relate to other areas of environmental concern. LWVC vertical positions on water will be the basis of any action. The committee will coordinate its activities with ENACT.

Juvenile Justice: The LWVC study of the juvenile justice system in California was completed seven years ago. At the time, Orange County agencies were trying to improve prevention strategies and outcomes for youth in the system. Since then, there have been major changes in the financial resources available and in the leadership positions in the law enforcement and service agencies which administer the juvenile

justice system and associated services. How is the system coping with reduced financial resources? Are prevention services in place? Have programs for youth and their families been initiated? Have programs been curtailed? What is the prevailing thought among professionals re treatment of juveniles in the legal system? There are numerous questions to be posed re the current status of delinquent, dependent and/or foster youth in Orange County. Media reports of crimes by juveniles are disturbing. An ILO Issue for Emphasis can focus members' attention on how Orange County youth are faring in the juvenile justice system and educate us about current problems faced by those who implement the system.

POSITIONS

GOVERNMENT

Campaign Financing. Support for limitation on contributions to county candidates with strict enforcement and penalties for violations. Accumulated contributions from an individual through several organizations should be limited. Disbursement of funds controlled by the candidate should be from one central source only. There should be complete disclosure of funding and disbursement during and after the campaign by all candidates. All candidates should be required to make personal financial statements with the County Clerk on the day of filing for candidacy. All public officials should file personal financial statements with the County Clerk annually during their term of office. Requirements should be strictly enforced through severe criminal penalties for violations. (1975)

County Executive Officer.

Because of the size and complexity of county government, an executive officer is needed. This office should be appointive rather than elective, with stringent qualifications; a job definition and job security based on a renewable contract. The County Executive Officer (CEO) should prepare the budget, provide policy recommendations to the Board of Supervisors (BOS), and coordinate departmental functions. Both elected and appointed department heads should cooperate with the CEO and only go directly to the BOS in very special instances. Information should be available to the BOS from many sources: departmental reports, citizen committees and commissions, citizen groups, letters and interviews. It should be available through the CEO so that it can be viewed in context with overall county government. The appointment of department heads is favored over election (1973, 1988, update 1998).

General Law Form of County Government. Support for the continuation of a general law form of government in Orange County. Continuation of a general law form of government is preferred at this time for the following reasons:

- The substantive powers of general law and charter counties have been made similar in recent laws and court decisions.
- A charter could be more inflexible than general law because each change requires voter approval.
- A charter can be unwieldy and difficult to change and can serve as a vehicle for special interest groups that want to change county government. A "patchwork" charter or government by initiative could result rather than government by elected representatives.
- The minimum benefits possible under a charter do not justify the trouble, time and expense of becoming a charter county. (1972, updated 1988, reaffirmed 2003)

LAFCO Position.

- Support for an active role for the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) in creating and maintaining a satisfactory environment, which is consistent with county and city general plans.
- Support for LAFCO's power to form special districts, initiate changes in districts through consolidation or dissolution, change the organization or boundaries of existing agencies, determine the spheres of influence for cities and special districts.
- The determination of which specific proposals can or cannot be supported under this position should be made on the basis of the League of Women Voters of California's vertical positions on Natural resources and Intergovernmental Relationships, and any other applicable League positions. State legislation should be encouraged to enable LAFCOs to have the power not only to oversee, but to initiate changes in special districts. (Reached by concurrence of the four local Leagues in Orange County in 1998, updating a 1976 position.)

Special Districts Position. *Support for the formation of special districts where needed services are not available.*

Because particular problems may need unique financing, areas that would not otherwise receive services and are willing to pay for such services may use special districts to obtain them. Special districts are covered by the Brown Act and should be responsive and accountable to the public by providing information about meetings, agendas, finances, board vacancies, and elections. Regular independent audits should be required.

Changes in the organization of special districts should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis using the following criteria: accessibility; accountability; economy; efficiency. (Reached by concurrence of the four local Leagues in Orange County in 1998, updating a 1976 position.)

Joint Powers Agreements.

- Support for the use of Joint Powers Agreements (JPAs) as a possible option to solve regional problems, avoid the duplication of functions and expedite action in emergency situations.
- Public hearings should be held prior to the formation of a JPA to allow for public response. Regular independent audits should be required. The board of directors of JPA agencies should consist of officials from the member agencies. (Reached by concurrence among the four local Leagues in Orange County, 1998, updating a 1976 position)

Libraries. Support of state, federal and local funding to promote and/or maintain professional standards of excellence in public libraries. (1996)

HUMAN RESOURCES/SOCIAL POLICY.

Housing.

- Support for a wide variety of planned residential density throughout Orange County, the construction of new housing units for families of all income levels, programs of governmentally subsidized low/moderate income housing equitably distributed throughout the county; the encouragement of public and private re-investment in older urbanized areas of the county as a means of preventing their decline and of improving the community. (1978)
- Support for the provision of emergency shelter for the homeless. (1986)

Child Care.

Support for total community involvement in meeting childcare needs. (1987)

Health Care for the Poor.

- Support for healthcare for the poor as a priority in the county budget.
- Support for prenatal services to ensure access for all Orange County women in need of prenatal care.
- Support for adequate funding of the Medical Services for the Indigent Program (MSI) to provide increased access for patients and to expand scope of services to include preventive medical care, treatment of chronic illness and continuity of care.
- Support for increased access to medical care for all school aged children with emphasis on outreach and education (1988) (2000)

Mental Health. Support of high quality Orange County mental healthcare services for children, adults, and older adults that are adequately funded, client oriented, comprehensive, delivered in a 'system of care' format - and involving all appropriate local governmental agencies - and which follows a social rehabilitation model. (1959, 1966, 1988, 1999, revised wording 2001)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Environment. Support for measures to enhance and preserve environmental assets. Support for measures to conserve open space to enhance the urban environment, to husband air, water, land and shoreline resources, to increase substantially the amount of publicly owned park and beach land; to protect the natural riparian features of all rivers, creeks, and streams; and to coordinate management of natural resources by all levels of government. (1961, 1973, 1982)

Bolsa Chica. Support for the preservation of Bolsa Chica as an ecological preserve surrounded by open space to prevent further degradation of a unique coastal resource. (1976)

Upper Newport Bay. Support for the estuary of Upper Newport Bay. Plans should give priority to those features which are unique to an estuary, development should keep artificial changes to a minimum. Upper regions of the Bay should be kept as a preserve or sanctuary for spawning and nesting of wildlife, as an educational laboratory, and for aesthetic pleasure. Maximum access to all tidelands and to adjoining uplands should be maintained and/or acquired by appropriate governmental agencies. (1970)

Regional Parks and Open Space. Support for the use of Accumulated Capital Outland Fund for capital improvements and acquisitions rather than for maintenance. Support for the consideration of open space districts and public land trusts as mechanisms for open space management. (1982)

Transportation: support of an Orange County Ground Transportation System to move people and goods which

- is comprised of a variety of transportation modes (single occupant automobiles, high occupancy vehicles, public transit bus and light rail service, 'heavy rail' for people and goods, bicycle lanes and pedestrian facilities, including convenient access to bus stops and the provision of benches, bike racks, and other amenities), with emphasis on increased public transportation services and other viable alternatives to reduce 'vehicle miles traveled';
- is cost-effective, efficient, convenient, well maintained, and not unduly disruptive of residential, business or recreational areas;

- is safe and secure;
- serves all segments of the population and divers geographic areas;
- includes a public transit system that serves a variety of trip purposes;
- minimizes harmful effects on the environment; and provides funding for studies of the effectiveness of mitigation efforts to sustain existing habitats;
- is integrated with land use policies and planning, so as to reduce 'vehicle miles traveled', and not contribute to 'urban sprawl';
- is supported by early and extensive public education and public participation in local and regional decision making processes;
- requires cooperation and coordination among all agencies and levels of government;
- is funded by all levels of government and user fees, combined with mitigation measures for low income, disabled, and elderly persons; all funding should be evaluated in terms of equitable sharing of transportation costs, effect on travel behavior and indirect economic impacts. (Adopted 2004)