



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE HOUSTON AREA**  
**2650 FOUNTAIN VIEW, SUITE #328 HOUSTON, TEXAS 77057**  
**(713) 784-2923 FAX (713) 784-2984 Email:lwv@lwvhouston.org**  
Internet: <http://www.lwvhouston.org>

## **POSITION SUMMARY**

### **Government**

#### **City Government (1993)**

- Support a strong Mayor/Council form of government
- Support a City Council electoral structure
- Support a City Council of optimal size that is determined by criteria which insure representation of all citizens, accountability, accessibility, effectiveness, affordability
- Support of single-member district lines based substantially on population which also ensure that minority rights are not diluted, reflect geographic common sense, maintain the integrity of neighborhoods, create districts which are compact, contiguous, and continuous in shape.
- Support 4-year terms for the offices of Mayor, Controller, and City Council with staggered terms for Council.
- Support for a special election to be called to fill a Council vacancy when ten months remain in a two-year term or twenty months remain in a four-year term.
- Oppose term limitations for elected officials. Support of appropriate measures, or "escape clauses," which will enable citizens to vote for candidates of their choice if term limitations are in effect. (1991/1992)

#### **City Charter (1974)**

Support a complete revision of the city charter of Houston. (1974)

#### **Financing City Government (1989)**

Support financial policies that are guided by sound principles of fiscal responsibility and operational efficiency; provide current revenues sufficient to support expenditures; are based on concepts of appropriate long range planning methods; are based on diversified sources of revenue.

#### **Budget Process**

Support a budget process that is based on long range planning; provides for thorough budget review and evaluation; has well defined channels for citizen input and review.

#### **Capital Improvement Budget (1988)**

Support the consideration of the capital improvement budget along with the operating budget. (1988)

#### **Libraries (1969)**

Support measures to insure adequate library facilities for Houston area residents, including merger of city and county systems and the regional library concept.

#### **Annexation/Disannexation (1979)**

Support annexation by Houston of the Ship Channel Industrial Districts, with negotiation of short-term contracts in the interim. (1977) The LWVH recognizes the importance to the city of Houston of the power to annex additional geographic territory in order to protect its economic base and to provide a government which addresses regional needs. However the League feels that Houston should exercise this power within the following guidelines:

- Checkerboard patterns should be avoided;
- No unincorporated areas should be left surrounded by the city (except those within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of another city);
- Houston should not pass over economically depressed areas as it proceeds with annexation;
- Houston should plan annexation in advance in order to make sure that city departments are prepared for expanded services;
- Houston should notify residents of areas to be annexed in advance and give them the opportunity to help plan how needed services will be provided and/or coordinated with facilities already in place;
- Houston should provide services related to public health and safety services immediately upon annexation, and set a schedule to provide other services within a reasonable time;

- Houston should provide adequate levels of services to all annexed areas, and this should be done without extra assessments to residents of areas where such assessments would be a severe burden. These should include: improving streets and drainage to a level at which services can be provided to people living on those streets; and provision of city water and wastewater service within a reasonable time if the area has no adequate facilities;
- establishes an impartial board to weigh the importance of annexation to the health of the city and the ability of the city to accommodate the needs of the area.

### **Comprehensive Planning (1984)**

Support the development and adoption of a long-range flexible, constantly updated, comprehensive plan, developed with adequate citizen input.

### **Tax Abatement (1996)**

- Support continued use of tax abatements as an economic development tool in competitive siting situations;
- Support enhancing tax abatements by using them to diversify the local economy, promote environmental cleanup, and revitalize blighted areas.
- Support annual collection and dissemination of objective data showing the costs and benefits of tax abatements.
- Support regional cooperation in granting tax abatements.
- Support a mandatory hearing, with widely disseminated notice, designed to give the public and competing business the opportunity for meaningful and timely input on whether a proposed abatement should be granted.
- Because tax abatements shift the property tax burden and give a competitive advantage to those receiving them, LWVH supports the regular re-evaluation of tax abatement criteria in light of broader community planning goals; regular auditing for abatement contract compliance and regular monitoring to determine whether community planning goals are being accomplished.
- Oppose school district participation in tax abatements, except when the proposed abatement is exceptionally beneficial to the school district.

## **Natural Resources**

### **Parks and Recreation (1970)**

Support measures to insure acquisition, maintenance, and development of public lands in the Houston area.

### **Transportation (1971)**

Support comprehensive transportation plans which include:

- best land use of land and access to employment, cultural, civic, medical, educational, and other facilities;
- public participation in the early planning stages;
- a well-balanced, environmentally sensitive, multi-modal transportation system which includes buses, rail, and well-regulated paratransit (jitneys, etc.);
- cooperation and funding of joint ventures among the different transportation agencies – Highway Department, Metro, and city and county;
- use of highway funds in the following order of priority:
  1. maintenance
  2. new construction
  3. public mass transit
- limited use of user fees such as toll roads to help fund development and/or construction of a transportation system. (1985)

### **Flood Control (1978)**

Support comprehensive long-range planning for flood damage avoidance in Harris County by considering all alternative methods for flood damage avoidance; the effect of future development on flooding patterns; the full effects of stream modifications; the flood plain as a multiple use resource, especially its role as a natural retention system which reduces and delays peak flows; economic, social, and environmental factors, especially water quality.

### **Solid Waste (1972)**

Support a long-range solid waste management plan which emphasizes recycling and development of new technology;

- separation of solid waste at the source; judicious use of incineration and land fills; effective land use principles;
- control of air and water pollution; regional planning; promotion of public education efforts;
- citizen participation.

## **Toxic Substances**

### **Support:**

- the protection of public health with special concern for sensitive populations as the primary factor in determining regulatory action and decision-making involving toxic substances, with economic costs a secondary consideration;
- a policy requiring industry and unions to fully inform employees and the public of potential risks of toxic substances, both in the work place and the community;
- informing the public of any possibility of adverse effect of toxic substances via clear labeling, public forums, public access to information, and articles and programs in all media to help make informed choices;
- regulating the transportation of toxic substances by enforcement of safety, speed, and inspection regulations; establishment of realistic schedules, routes, and work practices to protect the public health; requirement of complete and informative labeling on the transporting vehicle, whether hazardous product or waste;
- stronger regulatory efforts to control hazardous pollutants in air and water by frequent re-examination of laws and regulations as new information is developed through research, and by enlarging existing regulatory agencies, as necessary, even at increased costs to the taxpayers. (1983)

## **Social Policy**

### **Administration of Justice**

- Support the removal of certain areas of human behavior from criminal prosecution: sexual activity between legally competent consenting adults, gambling, adult access to pornography, use of alcohol. (1975)
- Support measures for rehabilitation of offenders, which would include punishment or penalties which fit the crime; more equitable punishment; alternative arrangements to placement of juveniles in state schools which would include small, family type units close to home with effective supervision and qualified personnel; provisions for pre-trial release such as are incorporated in the present (1974) Harris County Pretrial Release Program.

### **Bilingual Education**

Support educational legislation, policies, and programs that take into consideration the following:

- The purpose of bilingual education should be to teach every limited-English proficient (LEP) student to read, write, and speak English as soon as possible while maintaining academic achievement.
- The basis on which the effectiveness of bilingual education should be determined by how quickly transition into English is made; standardized testing results of academic achievement, using valid data that can be confirmed.
- Factors that negatively influence the academic achievement of LEP students are limited supply of qualified, committed teachers; high mobility of students' families; economic hardships; the low educational expectations of the teachers, family, and the children.
- The factors can be mitigated by consistency of curriculum among school districts; adequate resources available from the Texas Education Agency; working with families and teachers to raise educational expectations; creating new avenues for recruiting additional teachers who are qualified and committed. Because of the preservation of ethnic cultures is the responsibility of the home and other institutions, funding for bilingual education should be focused on the acquisition of English proficiency.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Support the requirement for schools to honor parental written requests not to use corporal punishment on their children. (1989)

Support the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools. This is a local position only.

### **Domestic Violence (1983)**

Support efforts to increase community awareness of the incidence of domestic violence; establish a process for keeping records on domestic violence calls, responses, charges, and dispositions; provide special training of police and special squads to deal with domestic violence; establish crisis intervention teams and provide aid to the victims; encourage the District Attorney's office to prosecute charges of domestic violence; encourage sensitivity to the problem of domestic violence throughout the justice system; encourage increased cooperation between agencies that deal with the problem; make counseling available for all members of a household involved in domestic violence.

## **Education**

1. Support measures to improve educational accountability program in the school districts of the greater Houston area, with:
  - shared responsibility of educational accountability at all levels of the educational process, including the Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency, local school boards, administrators, teachers, pupils, parents, and the community.
  - state legislative accountability for fair and equitable funding;
  - teacher accountability for knowledge of competency in the subjects they teach;
  - student accountability for conduct and attitude;
  - community accountability for knowledge of election issues;

- community involvement in accountability programs;
  - comprehensive student evaluations including methods other than standardized testing;
  - parental input in the evaluation process of the school district personnel. (1978)
2. Support equal access to quality education, including:
- providing opportunities for students to learn to function in our pluralistic community;
  - offering and encouraging the achievement of academic skills which enable each child to function at his/her highest potential;
  - providing superior programs and teaching which take into account the needs of the individual pupil;
  - offering superior programs in college preparatory and occupational/vocational training;
  - providing free transportation as an integrative tool for those requesting it;
  - student transfer policies which preserve existing integration;
  - magnet-alternative schools;
  - closing under-utilized schools;
  - combinations of the above. (1976)

### **Health**

Support the establishment of comprehensive public health services, including mental health services, for the citizens of Houston and Harris County. These services should be accessible in terms of cost, location, and education of the public. Emphasis should be given to prevention and primary care. (1978)

1. Support joint planning and coordination to eliminate duplication of health services, including:
  - reorganization of the City of Houston and Harris County Health Departments;
  - joint efforts by public health care providers;
  - development of specific channels for consumer input into health planning from the early stages. (1978)
2. Support measures to control the escalation of health care costs, including:
  - regionalization of highly specialized, expensive services and equipment;
  - utilization of alternatives to inpatient care;
  - utilization of para-professionals;
  - development of pre-paid group practices. (1978)

### **Housing**

1. Support equal opportunities for all Houstonians with emphasis on additional well-managed, low-cost housing and continued support of existing positions:
  - a minimum housing code used in conjunction with existing building, fire, health, and sanitation codes;
  - adequate provisions for enforcing these codes, and any relocation of families necessary through such enforcement, to be the obligation of the city;
  - completion of a workable program for land use and housing for more orderly growth of the city, thus leading to qualification for federal assistance;
  - encouragement of private investment in low-cost housing and the use of private initiative to seek new ways of housing the needy. (1971)
2. Support a substantial increase in low and moderate-income housing stock expenditures for Houston and Harris County above the 26% and 30% of Community Development Block Grant funds allocated in 1990. The League believes that Housing Assistance should be the top priority of Community Development Block Grant funding. We support equal priority for Capital Improvements and Economic Development.

### **Sexuality Education and Reproductive Services (1982)**

- Support comprehensive sex education in all public schools in Harris County, including greater parental involvement; broadening curricula; student access to specifically educated nurses, counselors, and teachers; greater use of city and county educational programs; programs to help parents open discussions with their children. (1982)
- Support adequate, easily accessible, publicly funded family planning services to meet the community's needs, including: confidentiality of all clients; efficient scheduling of family planning services; advertising; adequate funding; adequate, accessible facilities.
- Support equal access to legal and medically sound pregnancy termination services for all residents of Houston and Harris County, with government funding and/or a combination of government/private funding available for low and moderate income residents.