

and accountability and provides for analysis that reflects policy goals and directions; encourages public participation.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET

Capital improvement budget along with operating budget.

LIBRARIES

Measures to insure adequate library facilities, including merger of city and county systems and the regional library concept.

ANNEXATION

Power to annex additional geographic territory in order to protect Houston's economic base and to provide a government which addresses regional needs, with guidelines and long-range policies including policy for annexation and disannexation.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Planning in Houston's extraterritorial jurisdiction through development of goals and priorities by assessing needs of total community with public participation; central planning coordination and implementation tools for unincorporated areas; uniform performance building code for unincorporated areas; studies for consolidation of planning services between municipalities and Harris County; a broad-based planning commission; plan which includes economies, social, and environmental concerns; ordinance requiring the setting aside of land for open space and parks.

TAX ABATEMENT & TIRZ

Use of tax abatements and tax increment reinvestment zones with appropriate oversight and public input; support tax abatements as an economic development tool to attract new "magnet industries" and to retain existing businesses and encourage them to upgrade and provide new jobs; as an environmental incentive, for historic preservation, and to revitalize blighted areas.

ETHICS

Effective ethics regulation with strong enforcement.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE HOUSTON AREA, 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-HA believes that government policy, programs, and performances 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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ISSUES

WE SUPPORT



Government



Social Policies



Natural Resources



SUMMARY OF LWV-HA POSITIONS 2010-2011

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS-
HOUSTON AREA

GOVERNMENT

CITY GOVERNMENT

Strong Mayor/Council form of government with: Mayor as chief administrative officer who appoints department heads subject to approval of Council; presides over Council and votes on all business but has no veto power. A City Council as a strong legislative branch, that has direct input into formulation of Council meeting agenda; participates fully in development of the annual budget; can establish standing committees, has research staff and access to legal services. An elected City Controller who is independent of the Mayor and City Council. City Council electoral structure that provides for at-large members and single-member districts with a majority of members elected from single-member districts that are based on population in districts compact, contiguous and continuous in shape. City Council size determined by criteria which insure: representation of all citizens, accountability, accessibility, effectiveness, and affordability. 4-year terms for Mayor, Controller, and City Council with staggered terms for Council. A special election to be called to fill a Council vacancy when ten months remain in a two-year or twenty months remain in a four-year term. Oppose term limitations for elected officials. Support appropriate measures to enable citizens to vote for candidates of choice if term limitations are in effect.

CITY CHARTER

Complete revision of city charter of Houston.

FINANCING CITY GOVERNMENT

Financial policies guided by sound principles of fiscal responsibility and operational efficiency; revenues sufficient to support expenditures; concepts of long range planning methods, based on diversified sources of revenue. Support use of additional sources of revenues in order to decrease reliance on property taxes for funding General Fund Budget; debt service costs at level not to exceed 20% of General Fund revenues

BUDGET PROCESS

Process based on long range planning; provides for thorough review and evaluation, with citizen input and review. Budget format that provides for budget controls

SOCIAL POLICY

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Measures to create and then adequately fund and adequately staff a public defender office for Harris County; encourage court administrators and judges to continually assess and improve the systems of appointing private counsel to represent those indigent defendants who are not represented by a public defender; efforts to monitor and adjust workloads of both public defenders and appointed counsel with the goal that each indigent defendant receives competent legal advice and representation.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Educational legislation, policies, and programs that take into consideration that bilingual education should be to teach every limited-English proficient student to read, write, and speak English as soon as possible while maintaining academic achievement; because 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 & NEGLECT

The requirement for schools to honor parental written requests not to use corporal punishment on their children; abolishment of corporal punishment in schools. This is a local position only.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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 increased cooperation between agencies that deal with the problem; make counseling available for all members a household involved in domestic violence.

EDUCATION

Measures to improve educational accountability program in the school districts of the greater Houston area, with shared responsibility of educational account

ability 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; legislative accountability for fair and equitable funding; teacher accountability for knowledge of competency in subjects they teach; student accountability for conduct and attitude; community accountability for knowledge of election issues; community involvement in accountability programs; student evaluations including methods other than standardized testing. Equal access to quality education.

HEALTH

The establishment of comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and inclusive public health services for Houston Area residents; joint planning and coordination to eliminate duplication and gaps in health services and to improve the availability and quality of care; measures to control the escalation of health care costs; increase the insured population; accessing all available matching funds; and increasing the number of federally qualified health centers, school clinics, and other clinics that deliver comprehensive medical services.

HOUSING

Equal opportunities for all Houstonians with emphasis on additional well-managed, low-cost housing and continued support of existing positions; 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. We support equal priority for Capital Improvements and Economic Development.

MANDATORY HOMEOWNER ASSOC.

Protection against foreclosure on homesteads; priority of payments so that assessment payments apply first to assessments and then to non-assessment items; secret ballots in homeowner elections; adequate safeguards against fraud to assure uniform, honest and accurate election results; that the Texas Open Meetings Act and the Texas Open Records Act cover mandatory homeowner associations.

ELECTION LAWS & VOTING RIGHTS

LWV-HA supports every citizen's right to vote, improved voter registration methods, uniform election

procedures, clearly stated election laws, and the right to a secret ballot. LWV-HA also supports unlimited access to vote-by-mail, election day registration and centralized voting, and poll-site internet voting for military/overseas voters.

SEX EDUCATION & REPRODUCTIVE SERVICES

Comprehensive sex education in all public schools in Harris County; adequate, easily accessible, publicly funded family planning services to meet the community needs; 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.

NATURAL RESOURCES

PARKS AND RECREATION

Measures to insure acquisition, maintenance, and development of public lands by comprehensive planning for public lands to meet National Parks and Recreation Association standards; adequate funding; adoption of objective priority planning policy; investigation of legal ordinances to facilitate parkland acquisition and contribution of land and money by developers; cooperation and coordination of park services and planning between city and county; use of schools and churches for program development; opposition to long-term private and public leasing of public lands.

TRANSPORTATION

Comprehensive transportation plans which include best land use 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 funds in order of priority: maintenance, new construction, public mass transit; limited use of user fees such as toll roads to help fund development and/or construction of a transportation system.

FLOOD CONTROL

Comprehensive long-range planning for flood damage avoidance 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

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 landfills; control of air and water pollution; regional planning; promotion of public education efforts; citizen participation.

TOXIC SUBSTANCES

The protection of public health with special concern for sensitive populations as the primary factor in determining regulatory action and decision-making involving 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; 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, even at increased costs to the taxpayers.

BUILDING CODES IN COASTAL AREAS

The most up-to-date building codes possible for coastal areas, taking into account future storms of increasing intensity and frequency as well as cost. Building codes should take into account elevation, roofs and windows and should be strictly enforced at every governmental level. It is viewed that Category 3 protection is appropriate for this area.