



## Characteristics of Charter Schools Enabling Legislation

*Issue Position of the League of Women Voters of Alabama  
March 31, 2012*

The LWVAL does not take a position on whether legislation authorizing charter schools in Alabama should or should not be passed. However, its membership believes that charter school enabling legislation should at minimum include the following:

1. An explicit statement that all charter schools operating within the state are public schools, and, in general, are subject to oversight guidelines governing all public schools.
2. An explicit statement that all charter schools operating within the state operate under the authority of the enabling legislation and the policies and procedures developed by the appropriate supervising authorities designated within that legislation or appropriate federal law.
3. Designation of the State Board of Education and local school boards as the agencies authorized to grant and deny petitions to establish charter schools.
4. Prohibit private schools, religious schools, home schools, virtual schools, and for-profit entities from creating or managing charter schools.
5. Limit the number of charter schools established in a public school system. Among other things, such a limit would reduce the fiscal impact on existing public schools. One possible mechanism would be to make the limit proportionate to and based on a percentage of the total number of students within that school system.
6. Set a minimum and maximum size for charter schools with exemptions possible if sufficient justification is made.
7. Permit some flexibility in general oversight guidelines that all public schools are under (e.g., allow waivers for teacher certification for those with documented alternative training/experience in a specialty area and/or teaching methods).
8. Guarantee equal access to charter schools by students of all social, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.
9. No specification of allowable curriculum approaches or teaching models or methodologies. These decisions should be made by the organizers of the charter school and appropriate professionals, as reflected in the charter itself.
10. Academic accountability required throughout the duration of the charter, with at minimum the same testing regimes as required of other Alabama public schools. Additional assessment measures should be applied where appropriate (e.g., portfolios in art-focused programs, technical skills tests). The academic accountability information should be disseminated to parents, the community, local board of education, the Alabama State Board of Education, and appropriate accrediting bodies (where applicable).

LWVAL believes that transparency enhances acceptance of governmental decisions and support for public institutions. Therefore, easy public access to information about each charter school should be guaranteed. Examples of information that should be public include, but are not limited to: charter petitions, chartering decisions, school structure and operations, finances, governing body membership, curriculum, and assessments of academic performance.

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