



League of Women Voters of Alabama

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALABAMA SPEAKS OUT ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

The League of Women Voters of Alabama has recently adopted a position statement regarding the establishment of charter schools in Alabama. President Kathryn Byrd stated, "Charter schools comprise a very contentious issue right now, whose outcome will have an immense impact on public education in Alabama for years to come. We weighed the issues very carefully through a two-year exhaustive study by our membership to determine positions on which we could come to a consensus and those on which we could not."

As a result of the consensus process, the LWVAL did not take a position on whether legislation authorizing charter schools in Alabama should or should not be passed. However, the group did strongly agree on several features that should be found in any charter school legislation that is considered and/or adopted in Alabama. Among the League's strongest positions were the assertions that all charter schools must operate as public schools, be subject to oversight guidelines governing all public schools, and be guaranteed equal access by students of all social, economic, racial, and ethnic background. In contrast, the League stated that enabling legislation must prohibit private schools, religious schools, home schools, virtual schools, and for-profit entities from creating or managing any charter schools.

The LWVAL determined that charter schools, if authorized, should have some flexibility in curriculum and methodology, as stipulated by each individual school's charter. However, academic accountability must be required through the same testing regimes as those used for other Alabama public schools. Test results should be disseminated to parents, the community, local board of education, the Alabama State Board of Education, and any applicable accrediting bodies.

The LWVAL charter school consensus statement concluded with the assertion 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." The complete LWVAL consensus statement on charter schools can be found on the LWVAL website at www.lwval.org.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization whose mission is the active and informed participation of citizens in government. The League never supports or opposes political candidates or political parties, but does take position on selected issues, such as charter schools in Alabama, after intensive study by its membership.

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