



League of Women Voters of Alabama

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To Members of the Alabama Legislature

The League of Women Voters of Alabama has long supported the need for strong ethics legislation and open government. Our members urge you to support strong, effective legislation that:

- establishes clear and enforceable standards of ethical conduct for elected and appointed officials, public employees and lobbyists;
- establishes requirements that ensure that public office will be used for the public good, not private gain; and
- provides a legal basis for public confidence in the integrity of government.

Closely related to ethics law reform is the need to end all PAC-to-PAC transfers.

Government transparency in decision-making and support for reform regardless of party or ideology are essential elements to insuring public confidence. Accomplishing this through reasoned and courteous debate is important as well.

Based on an intensive study of ethics laws in Alabama and other states and thorough discussion among members in local Leagues throughout Alabama, the League believes ethics legislation must accomplish the following:

1. Provide the necessary powers to allow the Ethics Commission to function as an independent and impartial body, including
 - independent subpoena powers;
 - the ability to levy fines against those late in filing statements of economic interests; and
 - guaranteed and adequate funding.
2. Designate that officials inform candidates, public employees, and public officials of the procedures and rules they must follow.
3. Statements of economic interest must be submitted to the Commission by all elected public officials and all candidates for office, appointed officials and public employees who are paid \$50,000 or more a year (the amount to be

adjusted periodically), and appointed or elected officials at any level of compensation and holding any title who have the authority to make purchases in excess of \$1,000 or to collect or disburse funds.

4. Lower or eliminate the amount lobbyists can spend per legislator (or the legislator's immediate family) per day before reporting the amounts spent.

5. Public meetings open to all citizens except during discussion of a person's character or good name.

- Public officials should be required by law to follow the Open Meetings Law and be prohibited from using mechanisms to circumvent the intent of the law (e.g., serial meetings held by less than a quorum but with overlapping memberships).
- The Law should: apply to the state legislature and all of its committees; state boards, commissions and committees; and regional, city and county commissions, councils and boards. Timely public notification of these meetings should be required.
- The Law should include a provision to nullify decisions made in illegally conducted meetings.

6. Candidates for elective office should be required to disclose all contributions and names of contributors to their campaigns before each election. This information should be easily available to the public.

7. All governmental entities in Alabama should be required to take sealed bids on their major purchases and expenditures.

Please support effective ethics reform.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Byrd
Co-President

Charlotte Ward
Co-President