LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALABAMA PROGRAM 2015-2017

as adopted by the LWVAL Convention on May 3, 2015.
Updated January 28, 2017 with adoption by the LWVAL board of a new position on Payday Lending.

LWVUS SUPPORT POSITIONS

The League of Women Voters of Alabama (LWVAL)

- **Representative Government**: Voting Rights, Election Process, Citizen Rights, Congress and the Presidency.
- **International Relations**: United Nations, Trade, U.S. Relations with Developing Countries, Arms Control, Military Police and Defense Spending.
- **Natural Resources**: Natural Resources, Resource Management, Environmental Protection and Pollution Control, Public Participation, Agricultural Policy.
- **Social Policy**: Equality of Opportunity, Fiscal Policy, Health Care, Meeting Basic Human Needs, Child Care, Early Intervention for Children at Risk, Violence Prevention, Gun Control, Urban Policy.

<u>Impact on Issues</u> contains the history and details of each of these items.

LWVAL SUPPORT POSITIONS

The League of Women Voters of Alabama has also developed a series of program positions through the years. They are the result of study and consensus/concurrence on the part of the members of the League of Women Voters of Alabama. They have been adopted at different times and have different forms. LWVAL has policy positions on:

* Government
    - o Budget Process
    - o Campaign Finance Reform
    - o Constitution Reform
    - o Ethics Law Reform
    - o Ethics in Government
    - o Finance and Taxation
    - o Legislature
* Public Transportation
* Human Resources

- o Criminal Justice
- o Day Care
- o Department of Human Resources
- o Education
- o Health Care
- o Payday Lending

* Natural Resources
  - o Natural Resources
  - o Coastal Zone Management

GOVERNMENT

Budget Process 1987 (Updated 1995)

The League of Women Voters believes that the state budgeting process should
be an open process that includes public input in the setting of budgeting priorities, reflects programs needed and wanted by the people of Alabama, and finances state programs realistically.

The League, therefore, supports action to

A. Make information about the budgetary process as well as the enacted budget easily available to the public, using such means of communication as news releases, television coverage of hearings, distribution of budget materials to libraries and courthouses, and the Internet.

    1. The public should be informed about budgetary proposals as they are being developed and amended. Public comments should be solicited.
    2. The public should have easy access to the enacted budgets and explanations of their contents.

B. Require that the Interim Committee on Finance and Budget, or other legislative committees created to analyze state budgetary needs and proposals or make budgetary recommendations to the legislature, hold public hearings across the state to inform the public and receive citizen input.

C. Limit funding of non-state agencies to agencies determined to be of sufficient value to the state to deserve such support. Until such an assessment of non-state agencies is done, proration should begin with cuts in appropriations to all non-state agencies before any cuts are made in state agency budgets.

Campaign Finance Reform 1995

The League of Women Voters of Alabama believes that the methods of financing campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process.

Constitution Reform 1967 and 1973 (Updated 2002, 2009)

The Alabama Constitution should protect the people in the exercise of their civil liberties and provide a framework for government, broadly defining authorities, responsibilities, and relationships between branches of state government and between state and local governments. It should contain neither statutory law nor restrictive details that necessitate continual amendment.

I. A broad grant of authority should be delegated to those local governments that choose to adopt a plan for home rule to enable them to address local problems independently of the state legislature and/or the state electorate.

   A. The constitution should provide guarantees that the local electorate will determine the choice of local government. It should also guarantee that cities and counties have the right to construct charters to meet local conditions, as long as they adhere to a constitutional process with adequate safeguards. The constitution should require the legislature to provide optional plans of local government for cities and counties that choose not to construct their own local charters. The legislature should have the responsibility for ensuring the organizational adequacy of local government plans. The constitution should also guarantee the local electorate the right to alter the plan or charter once adopted, if the changes meet constitutional requirements.

   B. Counties and municipalities that adopt, through proper procedures, home rule charters or local government plans provided by the legislature should then exercise all powers of government not inconsistent with their charters, the state constitution, or general state law. Cities and counties will have the option to retain their current form of government with limited powers unless the constitution mandates that local governments choose a charter government or one of the optional plans.

   C. The constitution should encourage maximum intergovernmental cooperation in seeking solutions to problems that cross the boundaries of political subdivisions.

II. The three branches of state government should have authority sufficient to perform their distinct responsibilities independently, and they should function as co-equals within the traditional framework of checks and balances.

A. The Legislature should meet annually.* It should select its own leadership. Legislators should receive adequate annual salaries. The legislative apportionment process should guarantee fair representation to all citizens of the state.

**Adopted in Amendment 339 in 1975*

B. The Executive Branch should be subject to periodic reorganization to achieve maximum efficiency and economy. The governor should prepare and recommend a yearly comprehensive budget to the legislature.

C. The Judicial Branch should be organized as a unified court system.* A compensation commission should recommend salaries of judges.* Judges should be chosen by a form of merit selection with reappointment subject to approval of the voters.

**Adopted in Amendment 328 in 1973.*

III. The taxation and finance provisions in the constitution should provide for the flexibility to address changing conditions, an equitable distribution of the tax burden, and the economical use of the state's financial resources.

A. In its provisions for public indebtedness,

1. The constitution should permit the state and properly constituted local governments to engage in works of public improvement.
2. With reasonable safeguards, the state should be allowed to finance capital improvements by issuing general obligation bonds that pledge its full faith and credit, in order to secure more advantageous rates than those for indirect borrowing through agencies.
3. Debt limitations in the constitution should be expressed as a percentage of some reasonable measure of the state's wealth, not in monetary terms.

B. The state's system of taxation should be broad, equitable and efficient for the taxpayers of the state. It should balance regressive and non- regressive taxes.

1. The constitution should contain no fixed tax rates.
2. The constitution should place no limitations on ad valorem and income taxes.
3. The constitution should neither mandate nor prohibit earmarking of taxes.

With the prerequisite of an open accountable legislature, responsive to all the people, the legislature should be allowed flexibility in tax decisions to meet changing needs through statutory law rather than constitutional amendment.

C. To enable local governments to address local issues independently of the state legislature, local governmental entities should be granted taxing authority in their duly adopted plans or charters.

IV. The League of Women Voters of Alabama supports a convention of citizens for the purpose of rewriting the state constitution.

V. If the Alabama Constitution authorizes initiative and referendum, the Constitution should either contain safeguards in the initiative and referendum process to protect representative and deliberative democracy, guarantee basic rights found in the U.S. and Alabama Constitutions, maintain essential state services, and reduce the influence of special interests or require that the legislature include such safeguards in any enabling or other initiative and referendum legislation. *(See Legislature - Initiative and Referendum position.)*

Election Law Reform 1972, June 1988, February 2009 (Updated 1995 and 2003)

The League of Women Voters supports uniform election laws and procedures throughout the state to ensure the integrity of the election system.

At minimum these elections laws should include the following:

A. Simple and easy to understand procedures for registration and voting.
B. Uniform residency requirements.
C. A statewide computerized voter registration system.
D. Uniform application of election laws.
E. Consistent use of terminology by election law and election officials.
F. Uniform polling hours statewide from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.*

** Accomplished in 2003*

G. Designation of the Secretary of State as the Election Official for the State of Alabama. The Secretary should have the authority to

   1. Prepare a specific, required course of instruction for all election officials
   2. Inform candidates of fair campaign practices.

Off-Site Voting Adopted February 21, 2009

LWVAL supports absentee voting and early voting. The LWVAL also supports a simplified application process and elimination of any requirement of excuses for absentee voting and early voting while maintaining the integrity of the voting process.

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Ethics in Government May, 1991 (Updated 1995, 2003)

Ethics law should provide clear and enforceable state law regarding ethical conduct for
elected and appointed officials, public employees and lobbyists. The law should establish
that public office will be used for the public good and not private gain and should provide
a legal basis for public confidence in the integrity of government.

I. The Alabama Ethics Code should

A. Provide processes and procedures for ethical conduct at the state, county and city level for elected and appointed officials, public employees and candidates for elective office.
B. Require that the Ethics Commission function as an independent and impartial body.

    1. It should have sufficient authority to perform its responsibilities. The Commission should have subpoena powers and be able to levy fines against those late in filing statements of economic interests.
    2. The Commission should have guaranteed and adequate funding.

C. Designate officials to inform candidates, public employees, and public officials of the procedures and rules they must follow.

II. Statements of economic interest must be submitted to the Commission by the following:
    A. All elected public officials and candidates for offices.
    B. Appointed officials and public employees who are paid $50,000 or more a year (the amount to be adjusted periodically).
    C. 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.

III. Public meetings should be open to all citizens except during discussion of a person's character or good name. Public officials should be diligent in following the Open Meetings Law (Sunshine Law). The Open Meetings Law (Sunshine Law) should be maintained and applied to the state legislature and 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 state Open Meetings Law (Sunshine Law) should include a provision to nullify decisions made in illegally conducted meetings.

IV. Candidates for elective office should be required to disclose all contributions and names of contributors to their campaigns before the election. They should be provided with timely individual notices of their reporting obligations.

V. All governmental entities in Alabama should be required to take sealed bids on their major purchases and expenditures. These purchases should be widely advertised to allow any qualified parties to bid and all bids on a contract should be available for public scrutiny.

Finance and Taxation January 1989 (Updated 1995)

The League of Women Voters of Alabama supports action to reform the state system of finance and taxation. Alabama's present regressive tax structure places the heaviest tax burden on low income people, who pay a larger percentage of their income in state taxes than any other income

group. In addition, the present system of earmarking tax revenues causes inequities in funding the responsibilities of state government. The state revenue system should be broad and equitable.

The League, therefore, supports the following as part of total tax reform:

A. Any new taxes which become necessary should be based on ability to pay, in order to lessen reliance on regressive taxes.
B. The present mix of Alabama's taxes should be changed so that there is more reliance on property tax and income tax and less reliance (dependence) on general and selective sales taxes.
C. The sales tax on food should be eliminated, as it was for prescription drugs, but sales tax exemptions that are designed to benefit specific groups should be reduced.
D. Local government entities should be given more power to tax themselves.
E. Any new taxes and any increased revenues resulting from reform should not be earmarked. The LWVAL continues to support a revised constitution that neither provides for nor prohibits earmarked taxes.
F. The constitutional restriction limiting the income tax, Alabama's most progressive revenue source, should be removed.
G. There should be no constitutionally-fixed tax rates.
H. No specific monetary debt ceiling should be stated in the constitution. However, the constitution should mandate a specific debt limit that is a percentage of a reasonable measure of a state's wealth.

Legislature 2005

The League of Women Voters of Alabama reaffirms its previous position that the Legislature should be independent of the Executive Branch. The League supports the strengthening of the Legislature that it may effectively function within the traditional framework of checks and balances among the co-equal branches of government. The League also reaffirms its support in previous positions for constitutional guarantees of adequate representation for all citizens and annual meetings of the legislature for which legislators receive an adequate salary.

I. Leadership Selection

The internal leadership of the House and Senate should be elected by the membership of each chamber. As part of this position, the League reaffirms its support for the independent election of the Speaker by the members of the House as an essential aspect of its support for the separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches of government.

II. Assignment of Members to Committees

Assignment of members to committee should be based on several criteria, the most important of which is member expertise in the subject matter handled by the committee Additional factors that should be considered

include party ratios within the chamber, race and gender.

III. Standing Committees

The committee system, which is the core of the legislative process, should receive continuing attention with the aim of preserving existing strengths and eliminating the weaknesses.

A. Jurisdictions and Numbers

1. The legislature should clearly define committee jurisdictions and consistently assign bills based on jurisdictions, in order to strengthen the committee system and enhance the ability of committees to evaluate bills based on committee expertise.
2. The Legislature should use clearly stated efficiency and effectiveness criteria for determining the appropriate number of standing committees.

B. Duties and Operation

Each chamber should maintain and adhere to written rules related to the duties and operations of all standing committees. At minimum these rules should provide for the following.

1. Clear jurisdictional lines for each committee.
2. A requirement that all legislation be sent to and handled by committees based on jurisdiction.
3. Selection of all committee chairs by a vote of the membership of the committee regardless of party affiliation.
4. Mechanisms for the members to call committee meetings should the chair fail to do so.
5. Open committee meetings to ensure public access to deliberations.
6. Provisions for roll call votes.
7. Timely Internet posting of committee meetings including time, place and agendas.

IV. Legislative Staff Support

A. Nonpartisanship

The staff for all legislative support offices should be nonpartisan and professional.

B. Staff

1. The nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Office (LFO) should be maintained.
2. Objective legal advice should be available to all committees.
3. A nonpartisan policy analysis office should be established by the legislature. Priority in the office's research assignments should be given to requests for research from committee chairs and chamber leadership.
4. Adequate clerical staff for members should be provided in their Montgomery offices. Clerical staff for state legislators in their districts should not receive state funding.
5. Funding for the policy office and any expansion of clerical support should come in part from thorough reexamination of current legislative funding and possible

reallocation of these funds.

V. Public Access to Information

The Legislature should place the following on the internet to ensure that the media, citizens, and others have access to the information needed for informed participation in the political process.

A. Legislative budgets including the specific amounts budgeted to and spent by:
   1. funds for each chamber, the leadership, and the various standing committees.
   2. discretionary fund monies disbursed by the House and Senate leadership; and
   3. discretionary funds under members' control.

B. Information about all legislative meetings (chamber and committee) specifying time, exact location, and agendas prior to their occurrence, with such posting allowing sufficient time for interested parties to attend the meetings.

C. Roll call votes on bills and amendments.

VI. Lobbyists and Lobbying.

Lobbyists play an important role in the transmittal of information to legislators, but regulation of lobbying is necessary in order to prevent corruption and instill public trust. The League therefore supports the following:

A. Because campaign funding and the threat of its withdrawal is a major lobbying tool that may result in undue influence, the League supports a law to ban PAC-to-PAC transfers.

B. The current $249 limit on the amount a lobbyist is allowed to spend on each legislator and his/her family per day without disclosure should be substantially reduced.

C. Registration Process Changes
   1. Once registered, lobbyists are required to register new clients within 10 days. The 10 day period should be reduced.
   2. Internet postings should be used to allow lobbyists to register and to update their registrations, including registration of new client information and to pay filing fees online.
   3. To ensure enforcement of the regulations, the League reaffirms its support for adequate funding of the Ethics Commission.

VII. Initiative and Referendum Adopted February 21, 2009

A. The League of Women Voters of Alabama recognizes the value of an initiative and referendum process that allows citizens to take a role in initiating and voting on both laws and constitutional amendments. Currently, Alabama does not have initiative and the only form of referendum (voter approval or rejection of a legislative enactment) now in place applies to constitutional amendments. The state legislature must place its proposed constitutional amendments with statewide application on the ballot for voter approval.
B. The LWVAL believes strongly that the right of citizens to vote on constitutional amendments as now provided in the Constitution of Alabama must be preserved.
C. If Alabama adopts an initiative and referendum process, the LWVAL believes that the process must embody safeguards to protect representative and deliberative democracy, to guarantee basic rights found in the U.S. and Alabama Constitutions, maintain essential state services, and reduce the influence of special interest politics. Standards are needed both for the certification of an initiative proposal and for the referendum in which voters approve or reject it. The safeguards that the League recommends include:

    1. Proposal Preparation
        a. Limit each proposal to one subject.
        b. Explicitly bar propositions that would abrogate rights granted in the U.S. and Alabama Constitutions.
        c. Require initiative sponsors to file with a designated state official (e.g., Secretary of State) before collection of petition signatures begins
            i. the proposed initiative and title as they would appear on the ballot
            ii. a copy of the actual petition to be circulated; and
            iii. clear identification of initiative sponsors
        d. Mandate an impartial expert review of proposal wording before collection of petition signature begins to ensure the proposal
            i. is constitutional
            ii. makes clear what a “yes” vote and a “no” vote means in practice, and
            iii. uses language that is not offensive The review agency/agencies should be respected nonpartisan organizations such as the Legislative Fiscal Office, Legislative Reference Service, or Alabama Law Institute.
        e. Bar the filing of a defeated proposal until at least two years have passed.

    2. Signature Collection
        a. Set a reasonable time limit for the period within which petition signatures must be collected.
        b. Require signatures from registered voters only.

c. Require that signatures be collected from all areas of the state.
d. Base the minimum number of valid signatures needed on the number of votes in the last gubernatorial election.
e. Set the minimum number to initiate a constitutional amendment higher than for initiating a statute.
f. Require that all organizations working to gather petition signatures periodically file financial disclosure forms with the appropriate state office.

3. Campaign for Passage and the Vote
    a. Require validation of petition signatures for placement on the ballot.
    b. Place proposals only on general election ballots.
    c. For proposals related to statutes, require only a simple majority for passage. Set the number higher for constitutional amendment initiative proposals.
    d. Require an impartial analysis of the effect of the measure's passage on existing law, current levels of service, and fiscal consequences. This information should be disseminated as widely as possible. The review agency/agencies should be a respected nonpartisan organization such as the Legislative Fiscal Office, Legislative Reference Service, or Alabama Law Institute.
    e. Set a limit on the number of initiatives that may be placed on the ballot in any one election.
    f. Require that all initiative sponsors periodically file financial disclosure forms with the appropriate state office.

4. Legislative Role

    Serious consideration should be given to allowing for legislative action on an initiative in the session that follows the certification of the petitions. Legislative adoption of a statutory initiative as filed would mean the initiative could become law without a vote by the people. If the Legislature offers an alternative measure, both versions would go on the ballot. Should the legislature fail to act on the proposed initiative, the initiative would go directly to the voters.

See related issues under Constitution Reform position

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION January, 1999

The League of Women Voters believes that the state of Alabama, like most other states, should share in the fiscal responsibility for providing public transportation as it does for highway construction. Public transportation is defined as those forms of surface transportation which serve the public as a whole as opposed to the private automobile. These include, for example, fixed pools, park-and-ride lots, light and intercity rail, but not highway construction. In order to provide a stable funding source without further earmarking, this function should be included in the existing constitutional mandate earmarking gasoline and some other vehicle taxes for construction and maintenance of highways and bridges only. It believes further that local governments should be given the freedom to tax themselves for transportation needs without prior legislative approval.

1. Revision of Constitutional Amendment 93 of 1952, as amended by Amendment 354 of 1976, to include public transportation in the permitted uses of gasoline taxes.
2. Permission for local entities to provide for local transportation needs, including taxation with voter acceptance, without specific legislative approval.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Criminal Justice 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1979 (Updated 1995 and 2003)

The League of Women Voters favors an adequate budget to support criminal justice needs throughout the state.

In order to deal with the problems of reintegration of offenders into the community and to minimize the use of traditional incarceration, the League of Women Voters supports maximum efforts to expedite trial and to ensure swift and consistent justice. It also supports the concept of rehabilitation as a major goal of the criminal justice system.

The League recognizes the need to deal with the special problems of the juvenile offender by the development of programs and policies designed to aid in rehabilitation and prevention of further delinquency.

I. The League supports the following actions in relation to bail and pre-trial confinement:

   A. Reform of bail and pre-trial release practices with use of release on recognizance when possible. Cash bail should not discriminate against the poor, should be administered through the courts, and should be publicly accountable.
   B. Revocation of release for noncompliance with the terms of release, should occur only if the accused has had adequate notification of appearance, place and time.
   C. According persons held pending trial the presumption of innocence and the privileges consistent with this assumption.
   D. Granting the right to appeal a decision to detain pending trial.
   E. Crediting to a sentence all time spent in custody pending trial.

F. Use of citation or summons by appropriate officials rather than arrest procedures where appropriate.
G. Use of counseling programs as alternatives to pretrial detention.
H. Provision of medical treatment in a medical environment when needed for those held in custody.

II. The League supports the following actions with regard to the Alabama prison system:

A. Use of a classification system run by adequately trained personnel.
B. Rehabilitation opportunities offered for all inmates regardless of the length of their sentence or the offense committed. We support programs focusing on substance abuse as well as assistance to inmates in overcoming a lack of education. Emphasis should be placed on basic skills with a high school equivalency diploma as the minimum goal.
C. Priority given to prison industries that provide inmates with vocational training that they can use after release.
D. Minimizing the use of traditional incarceration. Should more prisons be built, smaller minimum security facilities should be located in areas where work release opportunities exist.

III. The League supports the following actions in the area of juvenile justice:

A. Creation and maintenance of a family court system.
B. A standard maximum legal age for juveniles set at 18.
C. Creation and maintenance of community facilities to treat status offenders under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.
D. Coordination by the Department of Youth Services (DYS) of services for delinquent youth and status offenders, including services provided by private agencies regulated and subsidized by DYS.
E. Establishment of uniform standards and procedures for the screening and diversion of juvenile offenders to non institutional programs and agencies.
F. Uniform probation services supported by state funding.
G. Appropriate time limits on periods of institutionalization rather than indeterminate periods.
H. Use of parole for juveniles held in state juvenile institutions.
I. Community aftercare programs and local case worker supervision for those released from juvenile institutions.

Day Care 1984 (Updated 1995 and 1977)

The LWVAL believes quality day care, defined in its broadest sense to include child care,
elder care, and care for those disabled, should be available to those who need it.

To accomplish this goal, we support the following:

A. The development of a variety of resources to meet the need for quality day care, both full-time and part-time, including before and after school child care. Employers, private day care providers and

government should be encouraged, with the aid of such devices as tax incentives, to help make quality day care affordable for all families.

B. Licensing should ensure that acceptable standards are maintained. The licensing standards should be enforceable and allow variety in programs. Exemptions from the standards should not be permitted. Enforcement of licensing standards should be conducted by qualified staff with manageable case loads, and sufficient power to close unsafe day care facilities.
C. Consultation services and training should be offered for providers to improve quality.
D. Zoning regulations for day care should be consistent with zoning for elementary schools and churchs.

Department of Human Resources 1987 (Updated 1995, 1997 and 2003)

The LWVAL advocates taxes sufficient to support social welfare programs. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) must have adequate funding in order to administer those programs designed to deliver services to the needy. The federal government should be responsible for the bulk of financial assistance; however, state and local governments should share in the costs of their programs. DHR services should not be reduced. When needed, additional funding for DHR should be provided from the General Fund Budget.

The state should appropriate adequate money to:

A. Fund any federal government shortfall in the food stamp and welfare cash benefit programs from the General Fund, if necessary, rather than reducing services.
B. Increase welfare cash benefit payments.
C. Maintain and expand, when possible, existing programs such as the statewide work program, assistance to two-parent families in need, protective services for abuse prevention and early intervention, and in-home care services to the elderly, blind and disabled.
D. Work toward a General Assistance Program to help those in need who are not eligible under existing programs.

Education 1964, 1966, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1999, 2012 (Updated 1995, 1997,1999, 2003)

The League of Women Voters of Alabama supports maintaining and improving a system of free public schools in Alabama based on the belief that a free public education which provides equal opportunity for all its citizens is an investment in the future.

Improvement may be achieved through action in support of the following:

I. Legislation that will assure adequate financing for the total needs of Alabama public schools. Such legislation should create a long term program for quality education.

II. Provision of free textbooks for public schools as part of a total needs approach.

III. Creation and maintenance of a process for selecting and distributing free textbooks. That system should meet the following criteria:

   A. Selection and final adoption of textbooks by a committee composed of outstanding members of the teaching profession chosen by methods free of political influence.
   B. Selection of the best textbooks nationally available based on valid educational objectives.
   C. Ordering and distributing textbooks on a nonprofit basis by the State Department of Education and the local Boards of Education.

IV. Continued federal funding of the following current K-12 programs, which schools with a low level of local support could not afford without federal funds. These federal programs, which contain no requirement for a national curriculum, include the following: child nutrition, special education, Title I (supplementary instruction in reading and mathematics), professional development for science and mathematics teachers, equipment and teachers for vocational education, and programs aimed at helping children at risk and providing a safe, drug-free environment.

V. Extension of public kindergartens, including support of permissive legislation enabling counties to conduct such programs.

VI. The League of Women Voters believes that an excellent higher education requires improved cooperative planning, coordination, and equitable support for the public institutions of higher learning in Alabama. Granting appropriate authority to the Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and improved teacher training are two means of achieving excellence.

   A. In regard to ACHE the League of Women Voter supports the following:

      1. Sufficient authority for ACHE to carry out its mandate.
      2. Mutual efforts by ACHE and the institutions of higher learning to eliminate unnecessary duplication of programs.
      3. A study by outside consultants of the state's needs in medical education emphasizing the possibilities of consolidation of existing facilities.
      4. Identification of the strengths and future needs of engineering education within the state.
      5. Implementation of ACHE's study based on long term planning recommendations that support League positions.

   B. In regard to teacher education, the League supports the following:

      1. Maintenance of high admission standards for entry into the institutions of higher education with greater emphasis on standardized test scores and preparation in mathematics, computer skills, and foreign language.

2. Programs of teacher education which
    a. Include preadmission and interim evaluation of all degree candidates.
    b. Emphasize subject matter expertise.
    c. Provide additional training for teachers already in the classroom.

VII. **Characteristics of Charter School Enabling Legislation** *Adopted 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:

A. 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..
B. 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.
C. Designation of the State Board of Education and local school boards as the agencies authorized to grant and deny petitions to establish charter schools.
D. Prohibit private schools, religious schools, home schools, virtual schools, and for-profit entities from creating or managing charter schools.
E. 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.
F. Set a minimum and maximum size for charter schools with exemptions possible if sufficient justification is made.
G. 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).
H. Guarantee equal access to charter schools by students of all social, economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.
I. 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..
J. 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.

Health Care 1986 (Updated 1995 ,1997 and 2003. Revised 2009 and 2011.)

GOALS: The LWVAL supports access to basic health care services for all Alabama citizens. This object should be accomplished through an equitable planning regulatory system that is subject to checks and balances and representative of both consumers and providers, and through the development of delivery systems that take into account the specific needs of children, the elderly, rural and disadvantaged persons. Access to basic health care is a universal human right that should be met by an expanded network of providers and coordination among providers. Other policy goals should include efficient and economical delivery of care, integration of technology with advances into care at a reasonable level of state funding.

The League of Women Voters, therefore, supports action on the following:

A. State public health planning should be organized to ensure that the deliberations and recommendation of the decision-making boards and committees are ultimately accountable to the people of Alabama. Their placement in the organizational structure of the executive branch and their interacting authorities should promote independence from political considerations.
B. The main criteria for processing Medicaid contracts should be quality of service and qualified reviewers.
C. Eligibility for treatment should be based only on medical considerations.
D. Conformity with federal regulations on the use of new techniques or advanced technology should be maintained.
E. Decisions of the Certificate of Need Board relating to allocation of new or expanded sites for health care facilities/agencies and technology should be based on strict adherence to regulations accurately reflecting the needs of the population to be served.
F. An aggressive campaign to reduce infant mortality should include access to an adequate number and location of affordable quality prenatal services such as mobile clinics, utilization of a variety of qualified medical professionals and provision for a variety of educational strategies about family planning and prenatal care.
G. The indigent care load should be shared by all health care providers, both public and private.
H. Counties should be required to pay for health care for their indigent population, but the cost of care should be billed through the state in order to speed up the collection of monies and to provide records reflecting the magnitude of the problems.
I. Every Alabama resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes health maintenance and disease prevention,

primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care. Access would be achieved with the use of wellness clinics or programs throughout the state and through public education about healthy lifestyles.

J. The League believes that efficient and economical delivery of quality care can be enhanced by such cost control methods as:*
   a. the reduction of administrative costs,
   b. the use of managed care (moving toward a model that encourages and incentivizes primary care and coordination of patient care through a primary care physician),
   c. utilization review of treatment,
   d. consumer accountability through deductibles and co-payments. * These are to be treated as examples and not as an exclusive list.

K. The League believes that the state must
   a. allocate medical resources to underserved areas,
   b. provide for education of health care professionals in needed fields of care,
   c. standardize basic levels of service for publicly funded health care programs.

L. The League believes that the ability of a patient to pay for services should not be a consideration in the allocation of health care resources. Limited resources should be allocated based on the following criteria considered together: the urgency of the medical condition, the life expectancy of the patient, the expected outcome of the treatment, the cost of the procedure, the duration of care, the quality of life of the patient after treatment, and the wishes of the patient and the family.

Payday Lending Adopted January 28, 2017

The League of Women Voters of Alabama supports action to change the current laws regulating the payday loan industry. Disproportionately, lower income borrowers are relying on payday loans for a variety of reasons, including a lack of other, more traditional sources of financial assistance.

Defaults on these loans often have dire consequences, different from traditional lending. As the debt amount rapidly multiplies, it can become impossible to repay. Because the current law allows payday loan establishments to charge interest rates up to a staggeringly high rate of 456% APR, these high interest rates, which rapidly multiply the debt amount, are one of the primary causes of defaults on the loans. High, additional fees charged when a loan carries over for another term contribute to defaults as well.

The League supports some or all of the following as part of payday loan reform:

A. Cap the interest rate at 36%.
B. Limit rollover fee amounts.
C. Provide consumer education programs related to finance.
D. Provide incentives for small loan lending by banks and credit unions.

E. Extend the time for repayment of the loan before a new fee is applied.
F. Require a multipayment plan to replace the current one-time payment plan.
G. Require the consumer to choose between a one-time payment and multipayment plan.
H. Require clearly and simply written loan agreements.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources 2003

LWV of Alabama supports measures to promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection of natural resources in the public interest. In agreement with the position of the LWVUS, the LWVAL believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of healthy ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources, especially air and water, should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the environment and to protect public health.

Coastal Zone Management 1980 (Updated 2003, 2009)

Recognizing its particular environmental issues and the unique value of the Alabama Gulf Coast to the state, LWVAL supports increased attention to identifying adverse impacts on the coast by the ecosystems of the entire state and establishment of regulations and enforcement mechanisms to prevent or to mitigate those impacts. LWVAL also sees the need for new assessments of coastal conditions and new regulations to address problems, including those caused or revealed by storms and development, in order to secure the future ecological health of the region in the face of the increased growth in coastal communities.

I. Standards and guidelines to protect the coastal ecosystem should be developed and periodically revised, based on the latest scientific research and methodology, and adjusted to specific coastal needs. Enforcement standards should include stiff penalties for infractions, repeated failures, and negligence. These coastal standards and guidelines should address the following:

   A. Water quality regulation should protect sources of drinking water, prevent polluted runoff, manage storm water, and mandate the best methodology for sewage treatment and management. State and local regulations should meet or exceed Federal Clean Water Act requirements.
   B. Natural features that serve as defenses against hurricane winds and saltwater surges should be protected, including dunes, barrier islands, bays, estuaries, grass beds, and wetlands.
   C. The Gulf of Mexico should be protected as a viable habitat for marine life by paying special attention to natural flow patterns and outflows

from bays and rivers and assessing the detrimental effects of human activity.

D. The quality and quantity of estuarine waters flowing through wetlands needs to be adequate to support the bio-regeneration of life that takes place there.
E. Quality of life and features of natural worth, such as the coastal causeway, coastal forests, Mobile Bay, the dunes, wetlands, state parks and wildlife habitats should be preserved and kept vital and healthy. Public access to beaches and navigable waterways should be ensured.
F. Special protections should be considered for especially sensitive water bodies that impact coastal ecosystems.

II. Environmental impacts should be considered and regulated for rebuilding and new development on the coast and for every new coastal enterprise that could adversely affect the coastal environment or ecosystems. At minimum, such actions should include:
   A. Comprehensive land use planning that will protect the coastal environment to ensure health, safety, and quality of life.
   B. Coordination of planning for municipalities and for unincorporated areas.
   C. The identification, mapping and protection of fragile areas.
   D. Regulations to control adverse environmental impacts related to construction and to limit any preventable sediment accumulation, in addition to addressing the protections listed above.

III. LWVAL supports reform of the present state and local regulatory and enforcement systems for environmental standards on the coast to encourage, facilitate, and enforce public and private cooperative efforts across political boundaries, including the possible creation of one or more regional authorities with enforcement powers. Structural changes should separate licensing from enforcement and from administration of rules and regulations to ensure accountability.

Energy Use in Alabama
Adopted May 3, 2015

Continuation of the development of a *Facts and Issues on Energy Use in Alabama*. Determine whether a study on one or more specific aspects of energy use in Alabama, including alternative energy and alternative energy policy, should be initiated as a formal study.