

League of Women Voters of Connecticut

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GUN LAWS

[LWVUS Position: Adopted 1990 Convention, amended 1994 and 1998]

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons.

Background and Action:

In 2004, a bill requiring the reporting of a theft or loss of a firearm and another bill concerning a waiting period for the sale of rifles and shotguns were both introduced. The LWVCT, in coalition with CAGV (Connecticut Against Gun Violence), supported both bills. The latter bill died in the Public Safety Committee. The bill requiring reporting of stolen guns passed two committees but remained stalled in the House. It died for lack of action.

The LWVCT also responded to several LWVUS Calls to Action regarding bills to renew the federal assault weapons ban.

In 2005, the stolen firearm bill was re-introduced and a new bill proposed expanding the registration coverage for long guns. Both bills passed the Judiciary Committee but, once again, became stalled in the Public Safety Committee despite active lobbying by the LWVCT and the Coalition.

In the 2006 session, the stolen firearm bill was re-introduced with active lobbying in support by LWVCT and the Coalition. It passed the Senate but failed to pass the House by 7 votes. In 2007,

a hard-won victory was achieved when the bill passed and was signed into law by the Governor, after intense lobbying by Connecticut Against Gun Violence, the LWVCT and others.

In 2008 and 2009, the LWVCT supported bills that would require the microstamping of semiautomatic pistols that would make it possible to link a gun to a crime. In both years, the bill died in the Judiciary Committee. However, a bill passed and was signed by the Governor that prohibited the transfer of an assault weapon or machine gun to a person under eighteen years of age. This bill was introduced as a result of an 8-year-old boy dying from the recoil of an assault weapon, which he was using under the supervision of adults.

During the 2010 regular legislative session, we supported a bill that would have mandated annual firearms safety refreshers and required notification to the Department of Public Safety of a firearms purchase within 24 hours. Although the bill was voted out of the Public Safety Committee, it was never taken up in the Judiciary Committee, and died.

In 2011, the LWVCT supported SB 1094 AA *Banning Large Capacity Ammunition Magazines*, which would have prohibited the possession of certain ammunition feeding devices that accept more than ten rounds, and opposed SB 1210, which would have created a presumption of reasonable self-defense in the use of deadly force against a person unlawfully entering a dwelling. Both bills died in the Judiciary Committee.

During the 2012 session, the League supported SB 64, which would have revised an existing statute prohibiting the carrying of a loaded firearm or hunting while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, to make the blood alcohol level for determining intoxication the same as for driving a car, and certain other administrative changes. Although the bill passed the Senate and was placed on the consent calendar, it was never called for a vote in the House. LWVCT opposed HR 5245, which would have barred the authorities issuing temporary permits to carry handguns from modifying or supplementing a uniform Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection form for applicants, arguably undercutting the CT discretionary “may issue” standard. Although the bill passed the House, it died on the Senate calendar.

Beginning in the days immediately following December 14, 2012 horrific gun violence in Newtown CT, LWVCT expanded its outreach and advocacy on gun violence prevention, both in Hartford and in our local communities. The League became part of the groundswell response across the state to this tragedy. While researching what legislative agenda could be undertaken consistent with the scope of the LWVUS gun laws position, LWVCT urged members to contact legislative representatives and demand action to improve public safety.

In short order, Governor Malloy appointed a Sandy Hook Advisory Commission to address key policy areas in gun violence prevention; and the General Assembly leadership formed the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children’s Safety. Each of the Bipartisan Task Force working subgroups — on Gun Violence Prevention, on Mental Health and on School Safety — held one or more public hearings beginning in late January.

After research and with input from the LWVUS advocacy team, LWVCT submitted testimony on January 28, 2013 to the Working Group on Gun Violence Prevention, and urged our members

to speak out for gun violence prevention measures in these four areas: universal background checks for firearms purchases; limitation on large capacity ammunition magazines; strengthening of the assault weapons ban, and strengthening of existing laws on the safe storage of firearms.

LWVCT supported two additional legislative proposals — requiring permits for rifles and shotguns and requiring firearms registration — after reaching out to local leagues to confirm member understanding and agreement.

Local league members became an integral part of the advocacy agenda. As LWVCT intensified advocacy and education efforts at the community and legislative levels, local leagues and committed individual members contacted legislators, sponsored letter writing campaigns and letters to the editor, attended public hearings and other gatherings at the Capitol and wrote their own testimony for the Bipartisan Task Force. LWVCT and local leagues urged members to attend the February 14 March for Change at the Capitol, which attracted 5,500 supporters.

Many additional gun violence prevention bills were introduced during the legislative session, and LWVCT submitted testimony supporting several bills which received a public hearing on March 14. Reportedly impatient with the pace of progress on a comprehensive gun bill, Gov. Malloy introduced his own set of proposals on February 22.

On March 5, the Bipartisan Task Force issued Working Group Recommendations—separate consensus proposals on gun violence prevention for the Democrats and the Republicans and joint recommendations on the mental health and school security proposals. The leadership produced a Bipartisan Bill on April 1-- SB 1160 *AAC Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety*. After vigorous debate, it was passed and signed into law by Gov. Malloy on April 4 as PA 13-3.

The League strongly supported those provisions of the new law which are consistent with the Gun Laws position, including extension of background checks to the private sale of long guns (rifles and shotguns); a new long gun eligibility certificate requirement to buy or receive a long gun (unless already have a handgun permit, handgun eligibility certificate or dealer permit); expansion of the Assault Weapons Ban to add more than 100 specified guns to the list of banned assault weapons, as well as a ban on LWVCT Impact on Issues 2013-2015 – page 69 semiautomatic pistols or rifles that can accept a detachable magazine and have at least one of listed military-style features; minimum age of 18 for purchase of a long gun; increase in penalties for firearms trafficking; ban on Large Capacity Ammunition Magazines that can hold more than 10 rounds; and strengthening of firearm safe storage requirements.

Additional provisions of the law, not covered by the LWVUS Gun Laws position, and on which LWVCT remained silent, included restrictions on ammunition sales to any buyer not already possessing a permit or eligibility certificate; creation of a gun offender registry; a ban on armor-piercing bullets; and six month disqualification for gun permit or eligibility certificate for anyone voluntarily admitted to a psychiatric hospital, other than solely due to alcohol or drug treatment, and extension of disqualification for involuntary confinement to a psychiatric hospital to 5 years.

The extraordinary legislative effort which produced the bipartisan 2013 reforms was followed by quieter legislative attention to gun laws. In 2014, the issue of “amnesty” for gun owners who

failed to register firearms in accordance with new requirements was raised, and LWVCT monitored bills and the budget implementer for surprise amendments; but the question was handled administratively.

In 2015, domestic violence prevention coalesced with gun laws in the introduction of bills to expand protection for victims of domestic violence by temporarily removing firearms from persons subject to restraining orders. Law enforcement generally recognizes that a woman is most at risk of death or injury when first attempting to leave an abusive relationship.

LWVCT supported SB 650 *AAC Temporary Restraining Orders*, which would have required the temporary removal of firearms from the home immediately after the issuance of a restraining order involving violence or the threat of violence, pending a hearing within 14 days. The Senate ran out of time to schedule a debate on the bill; and a similar House bill died on the House Calendar.

National Advocacy

During 2011 and 2012, LWVCT opposed the proposed National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act, which would have allowed any person with a valid state-issued concealed firearm permit to carry a concealed firearm in CT, without meeting CT's stringent requirements, thereby conflicting with and undermining CT permit and licensing gun laws. The legislation did not pass.

On the federal level in 2013, LWVCT obtained LWVUS permission to lobby our Congressional delegation in support of background checks, an assault weapons ban, limiting large capacity ammunition clips, and measures to combat gun trafficking through penalties on "straw purchases" of firearms that put guns into the hands of criminals. None of these had passed in Congress as of this writing.

HEALTH CARE

[LWVUS Position: Announced by National Board 1993]

Support a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost to be available to all U.S. residents. The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes, with administration either by a combination of the private and public sectors or by a combination of federal, state and/or regional government agencies.

Background and Action:

In 2007, LWVCT joined a coalition of organizations in the "HealthCare4Every1" campaign to advocate for accessible, affordable universal health care for all residents of Connecticut. The LWVCT submitted testimony in support of two Senate bills in March. One provided for a single payer system in addition to access to affordable universal health care; the other would have created a purchasing pool of multiple private health plans with a sliding scale for all uninsured residents. The legislature instead established a commission to make recommendations for 2008 and passed

an extension of the HUSKY health care program for youth and a raise in the re-imbursement rate for doctors and service providers for the poor.

In 2008 and 2009, the LWVCT supported bills that would establish a Connecticut Health Care Partnership. This bill would have expanded the state employees' health insurance pool and would have enabled certain municipalities, small non-profit organizations and small employers to voluntarily participate in a comprehensive medical plan by joining this larger pool, therefore giving them an opportunity to obtain health insurance for their employees that they might otherwise not have been able to afford. These bills successfully passed both houses of the Legislature but were vetoed by the Governor. LWVCT Impact on Issues 2013-2015 – page 70 2009 saw passage of legislation to establish the “SustiNet Plan,” a self-insured health care delivery plan intended to extend insurance coverage to the state's uninsured:

1. creating a large insurance pool that includes recipients of Medicaid and HUSKY, state employees and retirees, families without health insurance from an employer, and individuals having difficulty affording high-cost insurance on the job;
2. digitizing medical records linked to a central database that physicians and other providers must use as a condition of participation;
3. creating “medical homes” that offer patients round-the-clock central coordination of their health care as well as guidance in managing it;
4. relying on periodic quality review of providers and evidence-based medicine; and
5. providing for public health campaigns in support of such measures as health screenings and immunizations.

The Governor vetoed the bill, but her veto was overridden by both houses of the Legislature. The bill established a nine-member SustiNet Health Partnership board of directors required to make legislative recommendations by January 1, 2011, on the details and implementation of the “SustiNet Plan.”

On the federal level, the LWVCT supported passage of health care reform in 2010 in the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* intended to improve health and the quality of care, reduce costs and improve access to health care (Public Law 111-148).

In 2011, the LWVCT supported implementation of the SustiNet Plan (HB 6305), which was combined with HB 6308, *AA Establishing the Connecticut Healthcare Partnership*, and renamed *AAC Healthcare Reform*. This legislation requires the State Comptroller to offer employee and retiree coverage under “partnership plans” to non-state public employers beginning on January 1, 2012, and to nonprofit employers beginning on January 1, 2013. In addition, the Office of Health Reform and Innovation, and the SustiNet Health Care Cabinet are established in the Lieutenant Governor’s office; and changes in reporting requirements and state health insurance are included. Although the final bill does not include a nonprofit public option for health insurance, it calls for the SustiNet Cabinet to propose alternatives to the current health care system, including a public option. It became law, not signed by the Governor (PA 11- 58).

In 2012, LWVCT supported HB 5450, which would have established a Basic Health Plan, under an option available in the federal Affordable Care Act of 2010, to provide federally subsidized health insurance to individuals under age 65 whose income exceeds Medicaid limits but is within

200% of the federal poverty level. It was favorably reported out of committees but died in the House.

A successful 2013 bill supported by LWVCT was SB 1026, intended to improve health outcomes and ensure that Medicaid recipients have timely access to an adequate network of health care providers in time for the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. The bill unanimously passed the Senate and House, was signed by Governor Malloy and became Special Act No. 13-7.

LWVCT monitoring and advocacy in 2014-2015 focused on bills addressing the adequacy of provider networks; fee practices of hospital-based facilities; acquisitions and related transactions involving hospitals that would impact access to care (see also, discussion under Reproductive Rights); transparency for consumers; and authority for the CT Health Insurance Exchange to negotiate premiums with approved insurers.

LWVCT supported HB 5337 *AAC Fees Charged for Services*, which passed both houses in 2014, and requires hospital-based facilities to inform patients in writing of their hospital affiliation and their ability to charge an additional facility fee separate from professional fees. (PA 14-145) A last minute bill in the 2014 session, Substitute for Governor's Bill 35, adopted without public scrutiny, changed state law to make it easier for for-profit hospitals to operate in CT while expanding state oversight of changes in ownership. (PA 14-168)

Bills to direct the CT Health Insurance Exchange to negotiate premiums with insurers for qualified health plans offered through the Exchange failed in 2014 and 2015. LWVCT supported these bills in both years.

Various bills and health care proposals in the 2015 legislative session were swept up into the late session "Big" health care bill—SB 811 *AAC Hospitals, Insurers and Health Care Consumers*. (PA 15-146) The significantly amended final bill is intended to establish a consistent and fair process for hospital sale oversight by treating all sales equally, among numerous other provisions. LWVCT monitored but did not attempt to comment on this last-minute legislation, as the State LWV Position does not encompass hospital conversions to for-profit status or consolidation of physician practices with hospitals.

LWVCT supported original bill SB 993 *AAC Facility Fees*, requiring hospital-based facilities to post website notices concerning fees; and we monitored SB 809, which would have restricted and capped certain facility fees. Portions of these bills were included and expanded in the big health care bill PA 15-146 to limit allowable facility fees for outpatient services and to require that patients be given notice of costs. LWVCT supported provisions of another bill, SB 813 *AAC Health Care Price, Cost and Quality Transparency*, which would create a consumer health information website designed to promote transparency on health care cost and quality. PA 15-146 adopts provisions of SB 813 for the consumer website, as well as mechanisms allowing consumers to obtain comparative costs and coverage information.

Finally, the gigantic 2015 Budget Implementer SB 1502, included a requirement for youth athletic activity operators to provide an annual statement on concussions to participating youth and their

parents/legal guardian. LWVCT had supported the original bill HB 6722 AAC *Concussions in Youth Athletics* on which the modified provision was based.

MENTAL HEALTH

[LWVCT Position: Adopted 2003; affirmed 2013]

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut supports comprehensive, community-based mental health systems for children and adults. These systems should include early detection and intervention with a range of services to facilitate care, treatment and recovery. The LWVCT supports a public initiative on mental health.

Background and Action:

During the 2004 session, the LWVCT, as part of the Keep the Promise Coalition, testified on behalf of several bills to ease the plight of the mentally ill: an initiative for a new community mental health residential program for offenders with serious mental illnesses who are leaving correctional facilities, a budget initiative to add 180 supportive housing units for families, and a bill to mandate supportive housing for persons with mental disabilities. We also opposed budget cuts in community-based and early-detection mental health systems for children. Some additional funds were appropriated in the budget, and the Medicaid co-payments enacted in the previous year were repealed, but the specific bills did not pass.

Together with the Keep the Promise Coalition, LWVCT advocated for various housing bills in 2005. In 2008, with the assistance of our Mental Health Specialist, the LWVCT supported a number of bills to increase supportive housing for those with mental illness. These bills were merged and passed in the final moments of the session, resulting in \$35 million of increased bonding authorization for the Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority to support a round of 150 supportive housing units. Another bill, "Supportive Housing as an Alternative to Incarceration Centers," did not move out of the Appropriations Committee.

The LWVCT Mental Health specialist stepped down at the conclusion of the 2009 session.

During the 2011 legislative session, the LWVCT supported the bill "An Act Concerning Mental Health Parity," which would have required large group health insurance policies (more than 50 members) to comply with the Federal Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-243) and its regulations. The bill was voted out of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee but died in the Senate.

The Health Care specialist stepped in to cover mental health issues during the 2013 legislative session. 2013 was indelibly impacted by the tragedy in Newtown/Sandy Hook and the resulting advocacy for new laws to curtail gun violence, address shortcomings in the state mental health system, and improve school safety. The League strongly supported SB 1160, *AAC Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety*. This legislation included notable mental health provisions

intended to help individuals and their families overcome obstacles to accessing treatment and support, provisions that were based on the work and recommendations of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention. Provisions relevant to the Mental Health position included:

- Case management and care coordinating services for people involved in the probate court system;
- Mental health first aid training for school climate coordinators;
- Establishment of a regional behavioral health consultation and care coordination program for primary care providers of children. The consultation team includes child psychiatrist, social worker and care coordinator.

LWVCT thanked the Appropriations Committee for providing funding for mental health provisions of the bill. The bill passed the House and Senate, was signed by the governor and became Public Act 13-3.

LWVCT also supported a bill designed to implement a recommendation of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee regarding mental health parity. HB 6517 would have required the CT Insurance Department to select a method to check for compliance by insurers with state and federal mental health parity laws. The bill was voted out of the Joint Committee, but died on the House calendar.

Significant legislation was adopted in 2014 to implement the recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee arising out the Committee's post-Newtown studies. HB 5371 addressed the difficulties privately-insured families can face in accessing substance abuse treatment for their youth, by increasing access to substance abuse and counseling services; assisting insured families in gaining access to in-home services; and requiring compliance with the Affordable Care Act mandate to track client access to mental health coverage. LWVCT supported the bill, which passed both houses and became Special Act 14-7.

Two other mental health bills were adopted in 2014. LWVCT was supportive of SB 322 AA *Connecting the Public to Behavioral Health Services*, which establishes a Behavioral Health Clearinghouse to improve public access to information about these services. (PA 14-115) SB 417, a technical bill, allows mental health and substance abuse services to be provided at sites in addition to state-certified locations. (PA 14-211)

Another bill implementing PRI Committee recommendations was HB 5373, which mandated reporting on consumer ability to access mental health services, passed both houses but was vetoed by the Governor.

For 2015, attention focused on bills that were subsumed into SB 811, discussed under **Health Care** above. LWVCT supported SB 16 AA Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Behavioral Health Assessments and Related Consultations, which was reported out of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee but died after referral to the Appropriations Committee.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

[LWVUS Position: 1983]

Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Background and Action:

The LWVCT supported the passage of the Freedom of Choice Act, which would preserve the right of a woman to choose an abortion.

Connecticut continues to provide Medicaid funding for all medically necessary abortions exceeding the federal requirements of the Hyde amendment (1977). The Hyde Amendment is a rider that is often attached to yearly appropriation bills for Medicaid funding. It bans use of Medicaid dollars to pay for abortions unless necessary to save the life of the woman. States can use their own funds to cover other medically necessary abortions – usually defined by states as those to protect the physical or mental health of the woman.

In Connecticut, there is no parental notification law. Teenagers are counseled regularly regarding all options and parental participation in all decisions is encouraged.

In 2005, a bill was introduced to give Connecticut's uninsured adults greater access to family planning services and reproductive health care. The LWVCT, in coalition with NARAL, supported the bill, which passed. An amendment to another bill, requiring parental involvement in a minor's decision about abortion, was opposed by the LWVCT, although we took no position on the bill to which the amendment was attached. The bill and the amendment died.

In 2006, the "Compassionate Care for Victims of Sexual Assault" bill was introduced, which provided that victims of sexual assault would be offered emergency contraception in any Connecticut hospital or other medical facility where they were being treated. Due to strenuous opposition by the Catholic Church, the bill failed to pass. In 2007, the bill was re-introduced, with intense negotiations occurring between proponents and opponents in an effort to find a solution which would set a standard of care for the provision of emergency contraception to be delivered by hospital staff or a third party independent provider (nurse, doctor, physician assistant, advanced practice nurse) who would perform the sexual assault forensic exam and offer and provide the emergency contraception on-site. The LWVCT joined NARAL, Planned Parenthood, CONNSACS and other organizations to promote passage of this bill. The bill was overwhelmingly approved by both the House and the Senate and signed into law by the Governor.

Also in 2006, several attempts were made by some legislators to curtail reproductive choice, specifically in regard to parental notification. Those bills died in committee.

In 2008 and 2009, the LWVCT supported the unsuccessful Healthy Teens Act. This legislation would have required expansion of family life education curriculum guides for school districts to cover ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and a healthy teens education grant

program. Medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education is especially important, considering that there are a large percentage of teens contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

In the 2013 legislative session, HB 5296 was introduced requiring parental notification of abortion procedures to be performed on minors. LWVCT opposed, but no hearings were scheduled and it died in committee.

National Advocacy

When the federal Stupak/Pitts amendment to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was introduced in 2010, the LWVCT opposed this effort to restrict women's access to abortion coverage in the private health insurance market. The amendment was not included in Public Law 111-148, but the Hyde Amendment restricting the use of federal funds for abortions was issued by executive order and extended to this law.

In 2011, the LWVCT opposed the Pence amendment, which would have stripped federal funding from Planned Parenthood. The proposed amendment would have eliminated the national family planning program (Title X) and was aimed at Planned Parenthood with the claim that the money was used to provide abortions. This amendment passed the House but failed in the Senate.

The acquisition and conversion of nonprofit hospitals to for-profits, and related transactions, fell into the legislative spotlight during 2014-2015, with the introduction of SB 460 adding regulatory requirements relating to the conversion of nonprofit hospitals and of HB 5571, which would have required the issuance of a state certificate of need for the termination of reproductive services. LWVCT submitted testimony to the Public Health Committee reiterating the need to require that all essential medical services, including reproductive health services, be maintained in connection with hospital conversions and affiliations. In a last minute legislative compromise not subject to public scrutiny, the Senate and House adopted Substitute for Governor's Bill No. 35 (PA 14-168), which facilitates the ability of for-profit hospitals to operate in the state while expanding state oversight of changes in ownership.

The 2015 "Big" Health Care Bill also addressed hospital sale oversight (see discussion under **Health Care** above).

SCHOOL FINANCE

[LWVCT Position: Adopted 1990; amended and affirmed 2000]

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut believes that fairness or equity in education means more than the spending of equal dollars or the provision of identical programs for the education of each public school child in our state. The League therefore supports a system of public elementary and secondary education in Connecticut which will provide a suitable program of educational experiences for each child and which will make available to each community sufficient financial resources to support that level of educational services.

The League believes that the state has the responsibility to define broad goals for an educational program and to establish minimum required levels of student achievement. There should be significant local participation. School districts should be encouraged to exceed the standards where possible.

- 1. The state should assure through state grants to communities that sufficient resources are available for the education of every child, regardless of where that child lives. The state should fund 50% of the statewide cost of K-12 public education. Every school district should receive a minimum per-pupil state aid.**
- 2. Because of the wide differences in local wealth, greater equality of educational opportunity will require a greater average state share of local school costs. This means a considerably higher state percentage of school costs in poorer communities and a lower percentage in wealthier ones. State aid to any city or town should be free to rise each year by as much as the Educational Cost Share (ECS) formula requires.**
- 3. In measuring the relative ability of different communities to finance schools from local resources and therefore the relative need of each for state financial assistance, the state should consider:**
 - a. the community's property wealth as defined by its Grand List per Pupil or preferably per capita, compared to that in other communities in the state;**
 - b. the income level of that community compared to that of other towns in the state; and**
 - c. other demands on local tax revenues, such as police, fire and social services.**
- 4. The state should recognize that spending equal dollars per child in the school assistance programs does not mean equal educational opportunity. Since certain children are more difficult to educate, it is more costly to educate them to a minimum achievement level. In determining the total amount of state assistance to a community, many factors should be considered. Among them:**
 - a. the number of poorer families, possibly those on Aid to Dependent Children (in view of welfare reform legislation, a more accurate measure of children in poverty, such as eligibility for free or reduced cost school lunch should be substituted for Temporary Family Assistance);**
 - b. the number of those failing state Mastery tests;**
 - c. the graduation rates or drop-out rates;**

- d. the number of students not proficient in English; and
 - e. the Excess Cost Grant, which reimburses the district for the cost of the most expensive special education students, should be set lower than five times the local per-pupil costs.
5. In order to assure that increased state assistance for schools achieves an improvement in education, especially in poorer communities, the state should require a certain minimum expenditure per pupil for a community to be eligible for any state assistance for its schools. The state should also require that any increase in the school assistance be used for an equivalent rise in local school expenditures over that of previous years. The Minimum Expenditure Requirement (MER), the amount that a district is required to spend on education, should be equal to the Foundation times the number of Needs Students, as defined in the ECS formula.
 6. Local communities should retain control of instructional programs and spending allocations and there should be no cap on spending per pupil.
 7. If a substantial number of students in a district are failing to attain state-set achievement levels, the state should step in and work with the district to analyze the problem and to seek an improvement.
 8. The acute problem, particularly in cities, created by the concentration of children who for various reasons are more costly to educate, requires that the state adopt extraordinary measures directed at raising the levels of achievement in these communities.
 9. The programs and monies should, as much as possible, provide incentives for cities and towns to emphasize and execute effective educational programs.
 10. The cap on the ECS grant should be removed within two years as specified in the 1999 ECS legislation.

The Foundation, the basic element of the ECS formula, should be set in the state's biennial budget.

Background and Action:

Each session, numerous bills are submitted proposing various changes to the ECS formula and to increase state support for special education. In 2004, the legislature abolished the ECS cap and

appropriated money to begin phasing out its effects. Despite this legislation, towns were still receiving less than their full entitlement.

During the 2006 session, the LWVCT submitted testimony in support of bills increasing the ECS Foundation by 3%, tying it in the future to increases in the Consumer Price Index, and changing the definition of per capita income so as to incorporate more current data. These measures failed. The sole change made to the formula for FY 2007 was a provision that no town would receive less than 60% of its formula grant, which affected only Simsbury. Total ECS funding increased .4% (\$8 million) based on a town-by-town schedule that allocated proportionately more to towns receiving less than formula aid.

The LWVCT also testified on the following targeted measures: in support of \$3.5 million in additional funding for preschool slots in ERG I towns, which passed; in favor of \$250,000 competitive grants to establish all-day Kindergarten programs in Priority School Districts, which failed; for a requirement that the state provide assistance in the development of individualized education programs for diverse learners in regular education settings, which failed; for a measure requiring elementary schools in Priority School Districts to have Family Resource Centers, which failed; against a special levy on the state's wealthiest towns, which would have funded increased aid to towns with high educational tax burdens, and which failed.

Overall, state education aid increased by 3% (\$60 million) for FY '07.

Also in 2006, the Governor convened a Commission on Education Finance, whose mission was to address disparities in aid to municipalities. The LWVCT monitored the commission's meetings throughout the year and offered detailed testimony regarding our position on school finance at a public hearing in June.

In addition, we worked with the Citizens Network of the Capital Region (CNCR), a grassroots organization advocating reduced dependence on the property tax to fund education, to present four interactive community conversations on education funding. Three of these were co-sponsored by local Leagues.

In early 2007, the Governor's Commission on Education Finance published its findings, recommending overhaul of the ECS formula, modifications to other education grants, and implementation of a results-based school accountability system. The Commission's recommendations were compatible overall with the LWVCT school finance position. The Governor adopted most of the Commission's suggestions in her proposed budget for the 2008-'09 biennium.

During the 2007 session, the LWVCT formulated a set of legislative priorities for school finance and communicated them to key legislators. We testified in general support of the Governor's early childhood education, school accountability, and ECS initiatives, but suggested modifications to the Governor's definition of the ECS Foundation and the Minimum Expenditure Requirement (MER). We also advocated for: higher funding for other targeted grants, particularly pupil transportation, adult and bilingual education, after-school programs, and family resource centers; funding and implementation of a pre-K data collection system; and reduction of the Special Education Excess Cost multiplier to 3.5. We testified against the Governor's proposed 2011-'12 phase-out of the Priority School District grant.

The budget compromise that emerged from the 2007 legislative special session contained the largest increases in ECS funding (\$182 million for '08, \$80 million for '09) since 1996. The

accompanying ECS legislation made major improvements in the formula and included an acceptable MER. It did, however, contain a troublesome 4.4% minimum increase provision (i.e. hold-harmless) and did not include the type of Foundation definition that LWVCT preferred.

The adopted budget funded significant increases for early childhood education (including a preschool quality rating system) and implementation of a school accountability system. With respect to targeted grants: pupil transportation, bilingual education and family resource centers were flat funded; adult education increased about 5% for '08 only; after school programs received a 70% increase for '08, a tiny one for '09; the Special Education Excess Cost Multiplier remained at 4.5 and was fully funded. The Pre-K Data collection system was not funded. Phase-out of the Priority School District Grant was eliminated and instead a \$150 per pupil minimum grant was enacted. Overall, the budget increased education aid by 11.4% (\$237 million) for '08 and by 4.4% (\$102 million) for '09.

The LWVCT worked with CNCR in 2007, co-sponsoring a "Connecticut Summit on School Funding Reform" in January and a Bloomfield community conversation in April.

In 2008, the LWVCT supported targeted grants and other funding but opposed the Governor's proposed budget and lack of improvement in ECS funding. The Governor proposed a \$1.8 million reduction for 2009 to the School Readiness grant. The Appropriations Committee raised the Governor's proposal by \$32.3 million. The LWVCT advocated for a higher phase-in percentage and 60% funding floor for ECS, increases for pupil transportation, bilingual education, family resource centers and adult education, and restoration of the \$1.8 million for School Readiness and proposed reducing the Special Education Excess Cost multiplier from 4.5 to 3.0 and fully funding the grant. These bills died with agreement between legislative leaders and the governor to leave the adopted budget as is but the good news was that there was no cut to School Readiness. The 2009 adopted budget eliminated all funding (\$19.7 million) for the Early Reading Success portion of the Priority School District grant, which the Appropriations Committee had sought to restore, leaving the state's poorest school districts with no state aid for this well-respected program.

While the LWVCT's position on school finance calls for higher levels of aid to education than the state currently provides, during the 2009 fiscal crisis we supported simply maintaining current funding and opposed proposed cuts, the burden of which would fall mostly on the neediest districts and students in our state. Governor Rell's budget proposals, announced May 28, 2009, were claimed to "preserve municipal aid." While her latest proposals did maintain funding for Education Cost Sharing (ECS), by far the largest state grant to municipalities, they did contain significant cuts to several others. Those cuts would affect specific grants in support of public education; (e.g., Head Start Services and Family Resource Centers).

During the 2010 regular legislative session, the LWVCT opposed three school finance bills, due to cost and lack of new or specific funding streams, which bills would have increased high school graduation requirements, added two years of foreign language requirements, and added multiple proposals to reduce the achievement gap. We also opposed a bill to require the state to pay tuition for charter school students equal to the home district per pupil expenditure and deduct this tuition from the home district ECS grant, because of the impact on ECS and the disproportionate impact on poorer towns. Portions of these four bills and others were combined into a major education reform package (PA 10-111) that raised high school graduation requirements beginning with the class of 2018, lifted restrictions on charter school growth (without changing funding), added

student academic growth to teacher evaluations as of 2013, and implemented measures relating to closing the achievement gap.

With a looming budget deficit facing the state in 2011, the LWVCT supported most flat funding for education and opposed cuts to transportation and Priority School Districts (PSD). The budget as adopted added \$2 million to the Governor's proposed education funding, restored PSD to nearly flat and retained cuts to transportation. We supported the Governor's proposal for a task force to study ECS and other means of funding education; supported setting a Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) for town spending; and expressed concern regarding the funding implications of the Governor's proposal to transfer control of vocational-technical high schools to local or regional districts. The budget implementer bill HR 6651 adopted the ECS Task Force and Vo-Tech Task Force and modified MBR to allow for limited town spending reductions for enrollment loss.

In other legislation, the LWVCT supported the portions of HB 6432 "An Act Concerning Closing the Achievement Gap" to establish a task force to develop a statewide master plan for eliminating the achievement gap, but questioned the cost of curricula and reported provisions of the bill in the absence of additional funding. As adopted (PA 11-85), the legislation struck a provision which would have required PSD to offer universal pre-K and full-day K by 2013 and would have changed the K eligibility age in 2016. We also opposed mandatory pre-K on cost grounds as contained in SB 1103 "An Act Concerning Early Childhood Education." The final bill eliminated the pre-K requirement but retained agency reorganization to establish a coordinated system of early care and education within the State Education Department (PA 11-181).

In 2012, Governor Malloy proposed an ambitious school reform plan embodied in two major bills. The first, HB 5014 AA Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013, added about \$128 million to the budget for these education initiatives, including a \$54.5 million increase in ECS largely targeted at low performing districts. LWVCT supported most of the governor's reform ideas, particularly the Commissioner's Network, Talent Development and other measures designed to provide intensive intervention, improved instruction, increased innovation, and better college readiness. We also supported his proposed increased funding for early childhood education, magnet schools, and ECS, all of which were targeted at disadvantaged and/or underachieving districts. We opposed his proposal to fold the Charter School grant into the ECS grant and expressed reservations about giving charter schools a much larger increase than other public schools were receiving. The final version passed as HB 5557 (PA 12-104) and contained \$100 million for education reform, of which \$50 million was for ECS. Though it provided less funding than the governor wanted, the final package did adopt most of his new education funding initiatives, including the charter school measures that LWVCT opposed.

The second bill, SB 24 AA Concerning Educational Competitiveness, fleshed out the governor's education reform proposals, and LWVCT offered detailed comments on his plans for ECS. While we supported raising ECS funding and targeting larger increases to underperforming districts, we opposed folding a competitive grant not based on the ECS formula into that line of the budget. We also opposed requiring local districts to pay tuition for their students who attend state charter schools, reducing the ECS Minimum Aid Ratio to zero, setting the Foundation at an arbitrary round number, and basing education spending requirements for towns (the MBR) on their prior school

budgets. The final version passed as SB 458 (PA-116). It included the governor's proposed increases in ECS, but as a town-by-town schedule of grants rather than as changes to the formula. It eliminated both the competitive ECS grant and charter school tuition requirement, but retained the MBR.

Also during 2012, the ECS Task Force established in 2011 met throughout the year and LWVCT provided detailed input regarding the ECS formula. Though many of the conceptual changes we supported were adopted in the committee's final recommendations released in early 2013, the quantitative components of its proposed new formula fell far short of our hopes in that they were arbitrarily derived in order to produce the same inadequate bottom line as the old formula.

In 2013, Governor Malloy included in his biennial budget plan over \$118 million in new education spending for FY 2014. HB 6350, AA Concerning the Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015, and Other Provisions Relating to Revenue, included a \$50.8 million increase in ECS funding and significant increases to the education reform programs begun in 2012. However, it also reduced, eliminated, or consolidated a number of smaller grant programs, most notably eliminating the grant supporting transportation for public school children. LWVCT supported increased funding for ECS and most of the conceptual elements of the proposed new formula, which was the one recommended by the ECS Task Force, but opposed its specific quantitative elements on the grounds noted above; we also opposed the way the new formula was being phased in. We expressed support for increased funds for the Commissioner's Network and for Talent Development, the most significant of the initiatives begun in 2012, and opposed elimination of the transportation grant, continuation of caps on several formula grants, and the consolidation of 12 disparate grants worth \$59 million into a single budget account.

The second big education bill of the 2013 legislative session, HB 6357, AA Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education, detailed the proposed changes to the ECS formula and its phase-in. LWVCT supported raising the Foundation, using eligibility for Free/Reduced Price Lunch as the measure of student poverty, using Median Household Income as the sole measure of income, and changing the Minimum Aid Ratio to 10% for towns with the lowest performing schools, 2% for all others. We opposed the proposed Foundation amount because it was too low and was arbitrarily derived to produce a predetermined bottom line, the .3 weighting factor for poor students because it was not evidence-based, elimination of the .15 additional weighting for English Language Learners, and the proposed income and grand list adjustment factors because they were arbitrarily derived. We suggested specific ways the formula should be improved in testimony on SB 1098 AA Concerning the Education Cost-Sharing Formula, but that bill died in the Education Committee.

The budget bill and the education implementer were consolidated and passed as HB 6706 AA Implementing Provisions of the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2015 Concerning General Government (PA-247). It included the \$50.8 million ECS increase requested by the governor, but delivered via a slightly different formula and phase-in that still addressed few of the concerns LWVCT had expressed. The budget did, however, restore the Public School Transportation grant and most of the smaller grants eliminated or reduced by the governor, and also left separate the 12 grants he had wanted to consolidate. The Commissioner's Network and Talent Development initiatives were funded a bit below what the governor originally requested, but the final budget included money for programs he had either reduced or dropped entirely. Unfortunately, the statutory formula grants about which LWVCT had expressed concern remained capped.

A notable funding increase included in the 2014 budget implementer bill making adjustments for FY 2015 (PA 14-45) was the addition of 1020 prekindergarten seats, as well as a competitive grant program for eligible communities to increase pre-school capacity. The basic ECS funding saw an increase, as did money for Magnet Schools (in order to fund increases in enrollment and opening new magnet schools) and for Vocational and Agricultural Science Schools. Excess Cost (district reimbursement for a portion of special education costs) remained level funded, and the Open Choice program ultimately obtained an increase.

Despite media attention to the educational achievement gap in Connecticut, and support professed by elected officials at the state level for raising state educational performance, the education budget for FY 2016/2017 will see just small percentage increases; and funding for two important programs aimed at improving achievement in low performing districts drops significantly. (PA 15-244 and SS PA 15-5) The programs affected are the Priority School Districts, with a 7% decrease; and the Commissioner's Network, hit by a 27% drop in funding. Priority Schools will see a \$1 million increase in FY17, but its budget, including amounts for after school hours and summer school, will still be below 2015 levels.

Magnet Schools will see an 11% increase in funding, which includes amounts under the Sheff Settlement funds to be redistributed to Hartford magnet schools. The Open Choice Program in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport is essentially flat funded for FY16 but is scheduled for a large increase in FY17.

In other areas, Public School Transportation will continue to be negatively impacted after some years of flat funding, with a 6.3% decrease for FY16, and no change in FY17. ECS, the largest educational grant to municipalities, will continue to be underfunded relative to its distribution formula in FY16 and FY17; but there will be a slight increase in the total grant. Excess Cost, which has been flat funded for six years, will continue to be flat funded for the next two years, despite the fact that costs for providing special education services have been steadily increasing as a percentage of most local education budgets.

Finally, the 2015 session adopted changes in the approval process for Charter Schools (PA 15-239). Only "initial certificates" for charter schools will be granted by the State Board of Education, pending legislative appropriation of funding. Other provisions increase transparency of charters under the Freedom of Information Act, increase accountability, and require a charter renewal review process.

CURRENTLY INACTIVE UNDER FOLLOWING POSITIONS

HOUSING

[LWVUS Housing Supply Position: 1966, Amended 1969, then incorporated into "Meeting Basic Human Needs," 1990]

After adopting the Meeting Basic Human Needs position in 1988, the LWVUS reorganized the Social Policy program in 1990. The Meeting Basic Human Needs position encompasses previous positions on income assistance, transportation and housing. The issue of housing supply was separated from the fair housing position, which is still under Equality of Opportunity, and put under the Meeting Basic Human Needs position. **The Housing Supply position includes support for increased public funding, inclusionary zoning techniques and land use policies to encourage affordable housing production and rehabilitation, encouragement of private sector investment in affordable housing and more.** The full position is available online at www.lwv.org.

Background and Action:

In 2004 and 2005, the LWVCT opposed bills that would have weakened the Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure Act, neither of which passed. The LWVCT also supported the Partnership for Strong Communities' initiative to create a new \$100 million Housing Trust Fund for Economic Growth and Opportunity. It would have created a reliable and consistent source of revenues needed for the rehabilitation and production of housing for low and moderate income families. A Call to Action was issued to support the bill. Unfortunately, after passing the key Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, the bill did not pass. During both the 2006 and 2007 regular sessions legislation was introduced that would have weakened the Appeals Procedure Act, but none of the proposed bills reached the floor.

In 2007, HOMEConnecticut, staffed by the Partnership for Strong Communities, introduced legislation that would provide incentives to municipalities that allow creation of higher density affordable housing. The LWVCT submitted testimony on behalf of this legislation (SB 1057) not only because of its potential to spur construction of affordable housing but also because it encourages responsible land use. A Call to Action was also issued and although the bill was not fully funded, it was passed and signed by Governor Rell.

In 2013, LWVCT opposed HB 5894 to delay the establishment of the Departments of Housing. The bill died in committee.

INCOME ASSISTANCE

[LWVUS Position: 1971, Incorporated into "Meeting Basic Human Needs," 1990]

After adopting the Meeting Basic Human Needs position in 1988, the LWVUS reorganized the Social Policy program in 1990. The Meeting Basic Human Needs position encompasses previous positions on income assistance, transportation and housing.

Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Criteria should be:

- **eligibility of all low-income individuals for assistance should be based on need;**

- **benefit levels should be sufficient to provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter;**
- **there should be increased emphasis on cash assistance but in-kind assistance should be continued;**
- **under a revised program, participants should not have their benefits reduced;**
- **privacy of participants should be protected;**
- **work should be encouraged: participants' total income should increase as earnings increase;**
- **supportive services should be available but not compulsory for participants in income assistance programs.**

Background and Action:

In 2006, the LWVCT had a Specialist who actively worked in coalition with the Connecticut Association for Human Services in advocating for a state earned income tax credit. The effort was off to a very promising start when the Human Services Committee gave the bill (SB 147) bipartisan support and when the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee included a tax credit for low-income workers in the tax package it reported out of Committee. Unfortunately, the Earned Income Tax Credit failed to survive the budget negotiations.

The LWVCT submitted testimony in support of an Earned Income Tax Credit during the 2007 legislative session, but did not take action on this issue during the 2008 or 2009 sessions due to the lack of an Income Assistance Specialist. In 2011, the LWVCT signed onto a petition supporting the Governor's proposal to create a state earned income tax credit set at 30% of the federal EITC, and the budget bill SB 1239 establishing the credit passed and was signed into law by the Governor (PA 11-6).

QUALITY EDUCATION

[LWVCT Position: Adopted 1991; affirmed 2001; updated 2012]

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut believes that promoting racial/ethnic and economic diversity and avoiding racial isolation in public schools is essential to provide substantially equal educational opportunity for Connecticut children, as required by state law. Offering students diverse, inclusive educational opportunities from an early age is crucial to achieving national educational and civic goal and the state's educational, civic and economic goals to prepare students for higher education or productive employment, to give them the opportunity to be responsible citizens able to participate in our democracy, and to contribute to the state's economy.

A working partnership between state and local authorities must exist to guarantee success. The LWVCT supports the concept of collective responsibility among individual school districts and the state of CT to take proactive steps toward achieving diversity and avoiding racial isolation in the student population. Such approaches could include but not be limited to the following:

- **Magnet schools or programs with other specialized academic themes**
- **Schools with before-and after-school day care**
- **Schools with preschool programs**
- **Expanded vocational/technical school programs**
- **School pairings**
- **Collaborative inter-district school construction**
- **Redrawing of school boundaries or Inter-district student transfers**
- **Recruitment of minority teachers**

Within the traditional educational structure, students are assigned to schools based on the students' places of residence. We believe that alternative means of school assignment can provide flexibility in achieving the goal of substantially equal educational opportunity.

Background and Action:

The original position was adopted in 1991 as "Quality Integrated Education." A committee was formed following the 2001 Convention, reflecting delegates' desire to update this position, and recommended that the position be retained as written.

Various bills attempting to recruit and retain minority teachers, clarifying the charter school legislation and other initiatives were proposed in 2001. The LWVCT joined CAPE (Connecticut Association for Public Education) in a proposal to clarify the charter school legislation but the bill did not make it out of the session. The LWVCT has had no QIE specialist since 2001, but the position has been used in connection with action on School Finance.

At the 2011 Convention, delegates voted for a review and update of the QIE position; or, if no study committee could be formed, for the LWVCT Board to propose a restatement of the position to reflect the current educational thinking without substantially altering the thrust of the position. At the 2012 Council, the above restatement was adopted, based on the Board's recommendation, to include language consistent with current federal and state law.*

* Consolidated cases of *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, 127 S. Ct. 2738 (2007); *Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding v. Rell*, 295 Conn. 240 (2010); and the December 2011 Joint Guidance from the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education.

SCHOOL VOUCHERS

[LWVCT Position: Adopted 1996; affirmed in 2007]

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut believes that the system of elementary and secondary education must be fiscally and educationally accountable to Connecticut citizens. Therefore, public funds should not be used through vouchers, tax credits or any other incentives or payments, direct or indirect, to provide tuition support for students attending non-public schools.

The League bases its position on choice in education on three undesirable consequences: it will reduce fiscal and educational accountability; it will subvert the goal of equal educational opportunity; and it will sap public schools of financial resources and citizen support.

Background and Action

During the 2002 session, the Governor proposed a legislative package to build upon the federal No Child Left Behind Act. It didn't pass.

The LWVCT opposed a similar legislative package proposed as part of the Governor's 2004-'05 budget.

In 2008, the LWVCT opposed a bill that provided tax credits for donations to educational foundations to both public and *nonpublic* schools allowing money to be funneled into independent and religious schools. In this way, the state would not provide a direct payment for tuition but would take dollars out of the revenue stream for contributions which are earmarked for nonpublic independent and religious schools. The use of tax credits that support nonpublic schools was removed from the bill and eventually died. Because the national focus in school choice has shifted to charter schools, and LWVCT has no position on charter schools, our specialist has been following bills that may be of concern but has not advocated.

The School Vouchers specialist resigned at the end of the 2013 legislative session.

TEEN PREGNANCY

[LWVCT Position: Adopted 1989; affirmed 1999; amended and affirmed 2009]

- 1. The League of Women Voters of Connecticut believes that the problems caused by adolescent pregnancy threaten not only our youth but also the future well-being of the State of Connecticut and therefore must be addressed aggressively on the state level.**
- 2. Therefore, we believe the state of Connecticut must take the following steps:**
 - a. Ensure that all school-aged children K-12 have access to comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education that provides them with the necessary skills to make safe and responsible choices in regard to their sexual health.**

Teacher-training programs should be provided to ensure that such programs are well taught.

b. Support school-based health clinics to give adolescents access to a broad range of health care services, including reproductive health.

c. Support programs and services that provide information and access to affordable birth control in order to help adolescents delay parenthood and avoid unintended pregnancies.

d. Support appropriate services and programs designed to encourage and enable adolescent parents to finish high school and become economically self-sufficient.

3. Specific programs should be developed with the help of broad-based community advisory groups to ensure that there is local support and understanding of these programs.

4. The League of Women Voters of Connecticut opposes placing restrictions on an adolescent's right to obtain a full range of reproductive health services.

Background and Action:

No significant bills have been proposed since 2000. The LWVCT continues to monitor this issue. In 2005, an amendment to an unrelated bill proposed to require parental involvement in the minor's decision-making concerning pregnancy decisions. The LWVCT opposed the amendment. It did not pass.

Legislative efforts in this area have been taken principally under the LWVUS position on Reproductive Rights.

In 2008 and 2009, the LWVCT supported the unsuccessful Healthy Teens Act. This federal legislation would have required expansion of family life education curriculum guides for school districts to cover ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and a healthy teen education grant program. Medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education is especially important, considering that there are a large percentage of teens contracting STDs.