

EDUCATION

LWV – VT CONSENSUS POSITION ON EDUCATION FINANCE

The League of Women voters of Vermont supports equality of educational opportunity for all public school children in Vermont, and to that end supports the following measures:

1. A method of state aid distribution to produce that equality which recognizes the differences and needs of individual school districts and the needs of their students. Specifically, it should insure that every child should have access to high quality teachers and that competition between school districts for high quality teachers should be minimized. State negotiated teachers salaries and benefits would accomplish this goal as long as other conditions of employment were negotiated by the individual local school districts. Also, specifically it should insure that every student should have access to educational programs sufficient to accommodate individual differences and special education needs. Also, specifically the state should stipulate minimum curricular requirements and minimum graduation requirements, and should stipulate and monitor educational quality. Funding should not depend on quality, but the continued existence of a locally controlled school district should depend on achieving standards.
2. Determination of each school district's fiscal ability which takes into consideration income as well as property wealth and the presence of non-resident property and industry. Taxation should be based largely on the ability of individuals to pay.
3. Strongly favors the redistribution of the tax burden in Vermont, particularly the property tax. Resident's homes may be taxed differently than non-residential property. Supports land use assessment for farm and forest land rather than fair market value. Property tax relief should be used to aid low income property owners.
4. Administration reforms in the property tax, including mandatory training of local listers; consistent updating of appraisal techniques; the use of computers in appraising and listing; and keeping assessments up-to-date across the state.

The LWVVT opposes total state takeover of education funding, but believes the decreasing percentage of state aid over the past years has been a hardship on many school districts. The League of Women Voters takes the following additional positions regarding finance:

1. Encourages the raising of additional revenue for education by state government via new taxes or increases in existing taxes to meet a minimum state funding of fifty percent of the total cost of education in Vermont. The most appropriate sources of state funding for education are income taxes and property taxes with more emphasis on the income tax. The most appropriate sources of local funding are income taxes and property taxes with more emphasis on the income tax.

2. Supports long-range fiscal accountability of local school districts to include long-range program planning; maintenance of adequate facilities; and the impact of federal funding on local programs, priorities and objectives.
3. Supports encouraging school districts to merge into new, larger school districts for the purpose of reducing administrative costs; improving programs; and providing more efficient use of facilities, staff and teachers.
4. Encourages the adoption of sound accounting systems for local, state and federal funds at the local and state levels which would allow fiscal information and administrative objectives to be readily available to the public. This would earn support for education programs and for the schools as a whole.

Revised March 1994

LWVVT CONCURRENCE POSITION ON SCHOOL CHOICE

The League of Women Voters of Vermont believes in public education. The changes being produced by Act 60 are meant to improve public education, to enable public education to respond to student individual needs and to bring about improved teacher education and readiness.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont believes attempts to use public education monies for vouchers or charter schools are unwarranted. Vouchers, particularly when including private schools, take funds out of the system and will produce a segmenting of the student body, the failure of some schools and the monetary enhancement of religious and private schools at the expense of public schools. Charter schools have not been proven to be a secure answer to public education problems and have proven more costly in many instances as well as presenting accountability concerns.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont prefers to give Act 60 and the Vermont Department of Education more time to see how the changes brought by those two entities will strengthen and improve the public schools. The use of alternative high schools for some students; the inter-district cooperatives that have been developed; the focus of individual high schools in a particular scholastic area, as well as the push to bring about positive changes in teacher training, all point to an advance for Vermont schools. These must be given a chance to work.

Singularly, the transportation problems that arise with cooperative education methods will have to be addressed. Private transportation is not the answer. It simply means those students who have parents to drive will reap the benefits and those students who do not will be denied equal access.

It is the consensus of the League of Women Voters of Vermont that vouchers and charter schools are not options for the Vermont public school system. Public education is for the general good of society.

2002

(The above consensus was reached by concurrence with the position adopted by the Champlain Valley LWV in August 2001.)

LWVVT CONSENSUS POSITION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The League of Women Voters of Vermont believes that all efforts should be made to provide the same opportunity for uniform pre-school screening to each of this state's children. The term "uniform" is intended to mean valid and reliable screening which will provide comparable statewide data.

1. Appropriate screening devices used by trained screening staff should be administered, with attention to developing a uniform test basis.
2. Parents should be encouraged to participate in the screening process through attendance and by providing pertinent family and medical history.
3. Results of the screening should be interpreted to parents with suggestions when needed.
4. A decision making process regarding test results should be implemented to determine needed follow-up.
5. Summary data should be collected and reported to school administrators.
6. Screening programs should be coordinated with other resources within the community so that services are not duplicated.
7. State funding should be available to guarantee uniform pre-school screening opportunities to the children of Vermont.

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