



*The League of Women Voters of Lee County, Florida Celebrated its 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year 2014. We received Proclamations for Lee County, City of Bonita Springs, City of Cape Coral, City of Fort Myers, City of Fort Myers Beach and Letter from United States Senator Bill Nelson.*

## **Florida's Lee County Legislative Delegation, January 13, 2015**

### **Speakers:**

Clara Anne Graham, President  
Laura Miller, Environmental Chair  
Mildred Schindler, Health Chair

### **STATEMENT OF POSITION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

The League of Women Voters opposes all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. We consider human trafficking to be a form of modern day slavery and believe that every measure should be taken and every effort should be made through legislation and changes in public policy to prevent human trafficking. Prosecution and penalization of traffickers and abusers should be established, and existing laws should be strictly enforced. Extensive essential services for victims should be applied where needed. Education and awareness programs on human trafficking should be established in our communities and in our schools.

### **The Natural Resources League's Position**

The League supports the preservation of the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment. The League's approach to environmental protection and pollution control is one of problem solving. The interrelationships of air, water and land resources should be recognized in designing environmental safeguards. The League's environmental protection and anti-pollution goals aim to prevent ecological degradation and to reduce and control pollutants before they go down the sewer, up the chimney or into the landfill.

The League believes that although environmental protection and pollution control are responsibilities shared by all levels of government, it is essential that the federal government provide leadership and technical and financial assistance.

The federal government should have the major role in setting standards for environmental protection and pollution control. Other levels of government should have the right to set more stringent standards. Enforcement should be carried out at the lower levels of government, but the federal government should enforce standards if other levels of government do not meet this responsibility. Standards must be enforced in a timely, consistent and equitable manner for all violators in all parts of society, including governmental units, industry, business and individuals.

Environmental protection and pollution control, including waste management, should be considered a cost of providing a product or service. Consumers, taxpayers and ratepayers must expect to pay some of the

costs. The League supports policies that accelerate pollution control, including federal financial assistance for state and local programs.

The League supports:

- regulation of pollution sources by control and penalties;
- inspection and monitoring;
- full disclosure of pollution data;
- incentives to accelerate pollution control;
- vigorous enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions for states and localities that do not comply with federal standards and substantial fines for noncompliance.
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### **Energy**

The League supports:

- energy goals and policies that acknowledge the United States as a responsible member of the world community;
- reduction of energy growth rates;
- use of a variety of energy sources, with emphasis on conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies;
- the environmentally sound use of energy resources, with consideration of the entire cycle of energy production;
- predominant reliance on renewable resources;
- policies that limit reliance on nuclear fission;
- action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources and energy conservation through funding for research and development, financial incentives, rate-setting policies and mandatory standards;
- mandatory energy-conservation measures, including thermal standards for building efficiency, new appliance standards and standards for new automobiles with no relaxation of auto-emission control requirements;
- policies to reduce energy demand and minimize the need for new generating capacity through techniques such as marginal cost or peak-load pricing or demand-management programs;
- maintaining deregulation of oil and natural gas prices;
- assistance for low-income individuals when energy policies bear unduly on the poor.

### **Land Use**

*The League supports:*

- management of land as a finite resource not as a commodity, since land ownership, whether public or private, carries responsibility for stewardship;
- land-use planning that reflects conservation and wise management of resources;
- identification and regulation of areas of critical concern:
- *fragile or historical lands, where development could result in irreversible damage (such as shorelands of rivers, lakes and streams, estuaries and bays; rare or valuable ecosystems and geological formations; significant wildlife habitats; unique scenic or historic areas; wetlands; deserts);*
- *renewable resource lands, where development could result in the loss of productivity (such as watersheds, aquifers and aquifer-recharge areas, significant agricultural and grazing lands, forest lands);*
- *natural hazard lands, where development could endanger life and property (such as floodplains, areas with high seismic or volcanic activity, areas of unstable geologic, ice or snow formations);*
- reclamation of lands damaged by surface mining, waste disposal, overgrazing, timber harvesting, farming and other activities;
- acquisition of land for public use;
- identification and regulation of areas impacted by public or private investment where siting results in secondary environmental and socioeconomic impacts;
- review of environmental, social and economic impacts of major public and private developments;
- review of federally funded projects by all government levels;
- *conformance of federal land resource activities with approved state programs, particularly where state standards are more stringent than federal standards.*

## **Water Resources**

### ***The League supports:***

- water resource programs and policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality, water quantity, ground-water and surface water and that address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies;
- measures to reduce water pollution from direct point-source discharges and from indirect nonpoint sources;
- policies to achieve water quality essential for maintaining species populations and diversity, including measures to protect lakes, estuaries, wetlands and in-stream flows;
- stringent controls to protect the quality of current and potential drinking-water supplies, including protection of watersheds for surface supplies and of recharge areas for groundwater.

### ***Proposed Interbasin Water Transfers***

Interstate and interbasin transfers are not new or unusual. Water transfers have served municipal supplies, industry, energy development and agriculture.

Construction costs of large-scale water transfers are high, and economic losses in the basin of origin also may be high. Environmental costs of water transfers may include quantitative and qualitative changes in wetlands and related fisheries and wildlife, diminished aquifer recharge and reduced stream flows. Lowered water tables also may affect groundwater quality and cause land subsidence.

As we look to the future, water transfer decisions will need to incorporate the high costs of moving water, the limited availability of unallocated water and our still limited knowledge of impacts on the affected ecosystems.

In order to develop member understanding and agreement on proposals for large-scale water transfer projects, state and local Leagues need to work together. The following guidelines are designed to help Leagues jointly evaluate new proposals for large-scale water transfers.

The process for evaluating the suitability of new proposed interbasin water transfers should include:

- ample and effective opportunities for informed public participation in the formulation and analysis of proposed projects;
- evaluation of economic, social and environmental impacts in the basin of origin, the receiving area and any area through which the diversion must pass, so that decision makers and the public have adequate information on which to base a decision;
- examination of all short- and long-term economic costs including, but not limited to, construction, delivery, operation, maintenance and market interest rate;
- examination of alternative supply options, such as water conservation, water pricing and reclamation;
- participation and review by all affected governments;
- procedures for resolution of inter-governmental conflicts;
- accord with international treaties;
- provisions to ensure that responsibility for funding is borne primarily by the user with no federal subsidy, loan guarantees or use of the borrowing authority of the federal government, unless the proposal is determined by all affected levels of the League to be in the national interest.

## **Florida Coastal Management (Beaches) Position**

### **Beach erosion**

**1. The League overwhelmingly prefers the expenditure of public or private funds to purchase land or restore the natural dune systems rather than expenditures for coastal armoring to prevent erosion.**

**In the event of major storm damage, no property owner should be allowed to rebuild seaward of the coastal construction control line.**

**2. The public should compensate the owner for some loss of economic value. That compensation could either be through the transfer of development rights or tax incentives on the remaining property. League members do not believe cash compensation is appropriate.**

The League adamantly opposes artificial methods such as seawalls, breakwaters, groins and jetties that obstruct the natural sand drift, while recognizing that the dredging of inlets for recreational, commercial and military purposes is necessary. However, when that dredging takes place, the use of sand bypasses would lessen the impact of that dredging on coastlines down current.

## Beach access

**The League believes strongly that the state should provide for public access in both developed and undeveloped shoreline areas at reasonable intervals. In the undeveloped areas, that access should be provided in a manner that protects the coastal system; therefore a variety of access methods are appropriate.**

Beach access points or parcels where intense use is anticipated should have parking and support facilities. Seashore parks would best protect an undeveloped area if most of the park is retained in its natural state. Large undeveloped tracts may not be appropriate for public use and should be left pristine.

As much as possible the state should take measures to extend the ownership of sovereign lands on behalf of its citizens. Two acceptable methods are extending sovereign lands to include dry sand areas adjacent to the beaches and extending public ownership to include privately owned areas used continuously by the public for recreational purposes over a period of years.

## Fiscal policy

Because Florida's beaches are one of its most valuable resources, government should pay to manage and protect them. Public funds should not be used to protect private interests through beach restoration or coastal armoring, nor for any expenditure for coastal armoring on public lands.

Beach restoration and renourishment projects on publicly owned lands and the purchase of eroded coastal lands are wise investments of public dollars. In addition, purchase of land to provide beach access points, beach

access parking and passive parks, and to compensate for dry sand areas should be paid for by the public. Because the benefits of Florida's beautiful beaches are shared by residents throughout the state:

- 1. The source of financing should be broad based. A combination of federal and state funds in conjunction with local taxes, special districts and tourist development taxes should pay for managing and protecting the coast.**
- 2. Historically, the League has supported user fees and does so for beaches as well, with some reservation. User fees must be applied discriminately. The beaches belong to the state of Florida; access should be provided and any user fees limited to the cost to deliver services enjoyed by the payer.**
- 3. The state should assume the primary fiscal responsibility for coastal management.**

## Governance

While federal laws set national coastal policy and goals and local government is closest and presumably most responsive to its citizens:

- 1. The state should have the final responsibility in directing coastal policy for Florida's beaches. All levels of government need to coordinate their actions and have consistent goals and policies in order to be effective and efficient.**
- 2. Wise coastal management policies recognize the natural shift of the coastline.**

## **LWV Fracking-related Positions**

### **Natural Resources: The League's Position**

The League of Women Voters believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

### **Environmental Protection and Pollution Control: The League's Position**

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MENTAL HEALTH STATEMENT OF POSITION

The LWV endorses a mental health system which decreases dependency on costly emergency services, reduces poverty and homelessness among people with mental illness, reduces rates of incarceration, supports healthy recovery, and strengthens families.

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1. Services provided along this continuum should be based on consumers' needs.
2. The number of hospitals with psychiatric units and the overall number of beds for acute voluntary and involuntary psychiatric care must keep pace with needs statewide. The total bed count comprises the budgeted capacity of the State Mental Health hospitals and the bed capacity of community hospital psychiatric units.
3. Stable funding should be ensured for providers in the public mental health care system.
4. Provide services that are more accessible and available by:
  - a. allowing multiple points of entry,
  - b. increasing preventive and early intervention services to the general and target populations,
  - c. strengthening crisis intervention,
  - d. collaborating with other agencies,
  - e. using technology creatively, and
  - f. offering treatments which demonstrate a measurable outcome
5. A seamless transition must be provided for the consumer from primary care to intermediate care in state-operated regional inpatient units, and on to more acute care in State Mental Health Hospitals that also function as centers of excellence for research and education.

To fund these programs, the League recommends that Florida should:

1. maximize use of state and federal dollars,
2. implement full insurance parity for mental health care,
3. distribute funds in a manner that more directly links money with services provided,
4. develop new and innovative sources of revenue from both public and private sectors, and
5. develop a public awareness campaign to educate citizens about the critical needs of the mentally ill and the obligation of all citizens to respond.

To improve mental health care services, consumers must have:

1. a wide range of transitional and long-term housing options, from fully structured to fully independent,
2. wrap-around services including physical health care, dual-diagnosis treatment, geriatric treatment and employment/education assistance,
3. an outreach program for individuals experiencing homelessness and individuals resistant to treatment,
4. effective crisis intervention,
5. humane and quality mental health policies/services within law enforcement and justice systems, and
6. quality mental health services offered in correctional systems at every level.