



League of Women Voters
of
San Diego

Local Positions
August, 2011

INTRODUCTION

This booklet is a compilation of the positions taken by the League of Women Voters San Diego based on local studies undertaken throughout many years. Some studies remain applicable as originally written. Others have been updated. Given ever-changing conditions in our environment, some studies and positions may be due for reevaluation. Every year, at our Local Program Planning General Meeting, we take the opportunity to review existing positions and discuss the need for updates, new studies, and the desirable direction of advocacy and action based on existing positions.

PRINCIPLES

League Principles underlie all positions and League action and apply to every level of the League of Women Voters. They are concepts of government to which the League subscribes. The Principles are rather broad when standing alone, so it is necessary to exercise caution when considering using them as a basis for action. The national board suggests that any action on the Principles be taken in conjunction with current League positions to which they apply and on which member agreement and understanding are known to exist. (LWVUS, Impact on Issues, 2002-04, p. 70)

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems. The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

General Notes

The earliest date indicates the adoption of the position after a study; subsequent dates indicate updated positions after further study.

I. GOVERNMENT

City Government

Government Structures and Procedure: LWVSD supports a city government with structures and procedures that promote responsive, responsible and efficient government with adequate checks and balances of power, with equal opportunities for citizens and with provisions for citizen participation.('09)

Citizen Participation: City government should facilitate accountability and citizen participation within its structures and procedures, which should be:

Efficient and Effective

- Providing the simplest structure to serve clearly defined purposes and functions, avoiding unnecessary duplication and taking advantage of cost-saving technologies.
- Providing for adequate analysis of costs and benefits of offices and programs that takes into account social, economic and political considerations and that utilize community expertise.
- Providing for regular review and termination of offices or programs if their purpose is not achieved or a function becomes obsolete.
- Having a direct effect upon decision-making and providing necessary leadership orientation.

Equitable

- Providing services and opportunities for participation on an equitable basis to all areas of the city, with due consideration for differing neighborhood needs.
- Providing for citizen input which is representative of geographic areas and social composition.

Accessible

- Providing easily available and sufficient information to citizens to receive services and to participate, with times and locations of meetings and costs to participants considered.
- Providing for public access to meetings, agendas, reports, and records of meetings and persons making decisions.

Forward-Looking

- Articulating a coherent perspective of the present and future directions of the City, with attention to long and medium range planning and to the marshaling of resources to provide the necessary infrastructure for such a perspective. ('95)

City Council: Council members should be nominated and elected by districts; they should have salaries and staff commensurate with full-time responsibilities as the city's legislative and policy-making body. In the event of a vacancy on the Council, a special district election should be held if the vacancy is for a year or more. If the vacancy is for less than a year it should be filled by appointment as provided in the City Charter. ('83) There needs to be adequate balance between the legislative branch and the administrative branch of City Government. Members of the city council should elect a council president to serve a term of one year. The council president should set the council agenda. Three or more council members should have authority to place an item for consideration on the docket. The City Council should take responsibility for ensuring that legislation and policies that have been enacted are carried out. ('09)

Mayor: The Mayor should have salary and staff commensurate with full-time responsibilities. ('95) The Mayor should be involved in the planning of the budget from the beginning of the budget process. (00) In the event of a vacancy in the office of Mayor, a special election should be held if the vacancy is for a year or more. ('83) The Mayor should respond to requests for information from the public or the City Council in a timely manner. It is very important that the Mayor arrange to hear concerns from individual citizens and citizen groups on a regular and consistent basis in a public venue. ('09)

Chief Operating Officer: The qualifications required of the city's chief operating officer should be defined in the City Charter. ('09)

Standards for redistricting: ('89)

The redistricting process should include:

- specific timelines for the steps leading to adoption of the redistricting plan;
- public hearings on the plan proposed for adoption;
- an automatic, non-judicial backup procedure in the event of a deadlock;
- a requirement that any redistricting plan drawn be adopted by more than a simple majority vote.

Redistricting plan standards, regardless of who has responsibility for redistricting should include:

- substantially equal populations;
- geographic contiguity;
- protection from diluting voting strength of a racial or linguistic minority;
- preservation and protection of "communities of interest" to the extent possible.

The redistricting plan standards should not allow the goal of protecting incumbents or preferential treatment of one political party. Each district should consist of 100,000-150,000 people.

Redistricting should be done by a special non-partisan commission, not by the Mayor or Council alone. The preferred method is the formation of a Redistricting Commission by having:

- each Council Member submit to the Mayor the names of 3 nominees from which the Mayor shall appoint one to serve;

- the Mayor appoint another person who shall be the presiding officer of the Commission;
- the Commission include representatives of minority group interests and public interest groups;
- all appointed members confirmed by the City Council (Charter Review Commission recommendation, 1989).

Planning Department: LWVSD supports a separate Planning Department headed by a Planning Director reporting directly to the Mayor or City Council. Functions performed by this department should include: preparation of the General Plan and Community Plans; preparation of project plans; management of land use and development; coordination and review of plans and projects with other departments and jurisdictions; active participation in the preparation of the capital budget; research in cooperation with other agencies; public service and education; environmental review.

LWVSD supports including, as part of the General Plan, an implementation program which includes a capital improvements program and commitment to facilities financing.

LWVSD supports including, as part of the General Plan, the current Council Policy to update the General Plan every five (5) years. Updating the Plan should be an on going process using available technology with extensive public participation. Sufficient funding and personnel should be dedicated to the process to enable meeting the five- (5) year goal. ('96)

Police-Community Relations

The City Council has the responsibility for police-community relations policies and programs within the entire Police Department and the community. The City Council should evaluate present policies for complaint procedures aimed at including citizen participation in the procedure. (before 1971) There should be continued training, especially in the area of human relations; high standards for police personnel ('75); and salary competitive with that of other large cities in the state. ('84)

Civil Service System of Employment

City Government should maintain a civil service system of employment, which is guided by the principles of political neutrality, job competition by merit and equal opportunity for all through a commitment to the affirmative action needed to make openness of employment a reality.

Political Neutrality: Politics should be completely separated from all aspects of classified employment, recruitment, hiring, firing, promotion, and disciplinary action.

Structure: The system should include job classification and a balance of power and responsibility shared by the Civil Service Commission, the Mayor and Council, and the City Attorney.

Recruiting and Selection: In order to employ qualified, competent people who represent a broad spectrum of the community and are committed to public service, the city should:

- base selection on job-related skills;
- advertise job opportunities through all forms of the news media and provide wide knowledge of and access to job bulletins;
- expand the minimum job application time period;
- conduct on-going evaluations of minimum requirement with emphasis on individual background;
- credit volunteer and part-time experience as job qualifications;
- inform applicants of their rights in the employment process;
- counsel applicants so those individuals understand the job description and how their qualifications apply to city jobs;
- conduct job-related oral interviews utilizing uniform questions and selecting citizen interviewers from all segments of the community;
- develop training and apprentice programs;
- limit the use of veterans' points.

Working Conditions: The city needs to develop procedures and incentives to encourage present employees to pursue career opportunities; promotional exams should be open to city employees as well as those outside city employment. Employees should be periodically evaluated for their competence and supervisors should create a positive atmosphere to achieve efficient employee performance. Probationary employees should be given rights of appeal.

Equal Opportunity: The city has the obligation to be the leader in using affirmative action procedures in all employment processes (recruiting, testing, selection, hiring, and promotion) to include more women and minorities in the work force and it should utilize statistics to assure attainment of its affirmative action goals. Affirmative action goals should be determined by comparing the number of men, women, and minorities actually employed by the city in all job classifications at all levels with the number available and qualified in the local work force. ('74, '75)

Fiscal Management

Budget Process: The Council should set guidelines and priorities before budget development begins. Funds from other governmental levels should be sought when those funds are compatible with long-range planning and local criteria. Bonding is a suitable method for financing capital improvements. ('76) Efforts to restore flexibility and local control to the city budget process should be encouraged. ('91)

Revenues: A flexible and equitable structure should include revenues derived from sources based on an ability to pay, with a combination of local, state, and federal revenues and with low administrative costs compared to revenue produced. ('91)

Budget Development: At the beginning of the annual budget cycle, the Mayor and Council should set priorities and guidelines for the Chief Operating Officer to use in preparing the budget. ('76) The Mayor should be involved in the planning of the budget

from the beginning of the budget process. There should be an independent budget analyst available to the Mayor and the Council members. ('00) Public hearings should be held at this early stage. ('91)

Service Codes: It is more desirable to rely on general fund financing rather than establish special funds for those services which benefit the entire community or promote general health, welfare and safety. User charges are acceptable when the cost of service can be measured, the benefit of service is directly derived by individual or property, administrative costs are relatively low; and there is provision for persons unable to pay fees or charges levied on essential community-wide services (such as trash collection).

Federal and State Funds: Funds from other governmental levels should be sought when compatible with long-range planning and community needs and when local government is involved in the planning and administration of such funds.

Bonding: Bonding is the most desirable method of financing capital improvements and local government should make greater use of its bonding capacity, with general obligation bonds preferred over methods which incur continuing liabilities without voter approval.

Transient Occupancy Tax

League supports:

- a TOT budget and TOT fund that are clear and user-friendly for appropriate public use. The fund balance should be publicly reported annually;
- a collaborative strategic planning process to establish TOT funding priorities.
- a TOT administrator responsible for all TOT –related business, who reports to the Mayor. Responsibilities include administering the TOT ordinance, strategic planning, developing and implementing measures of efficiency and effectiveness of programs and making financial records available for auditing.
- not limiting the Special Promotional Programs (SPP) share of TOT funds to promoting growth related to the tourism industry;
- restoration of the contribution of TOT funds to the Housing Trust Fund;
- basing the TOT rate on the rates charged by competing cities. The rate should take into account potential negative impact on the tourism industry;
- full cost recovery from TOT to serve visitors. (2002)

II. SOCIAL POLICIES

Education

Goals: The San Diego public school system should ensure quality education for all (before 1971) and seek to eliminate majority/minority group isolation. The system should provide an adequate financial program; quality counseling and guidance programs; individualized, innovative curricula; and compensatory education programs. ('79)

Curriculum: Individualized and innovative curricula should be designed to meet individual student's needs. Compensatory education programs should be developed to enrich and increase educational opportunity. (before '71)

Desegregation: The school board should give high priority to the impact on desegregation efforts when deciding on sites for new school facilities or for the school closures. It should adopt attendance policies which act to reduce minority/majority group isolation. ('79)

Financial/Budgetary: The financial program should include adequate funds for school operation and construction and provide employee salaries competitive with those of other large districts within the state. (before '71) Each year's budget should be based on priorities established by the Board of Education with meaningful input from citizens, teachers, students, and administrators. The budget document should be more than an accounting tool; it should be well indexed with a glossary of technical terms. The budget should include information such as program costs directly related to the number of students served, cost trends over several successive years, and costs by program and object for the total budget. ('76) A district-wide budget advisory committee should be retained to advise the Board of Education. The committee should be broadly representative of school and community interests. Their membership should include teachers, students, parents and other community representatives. ('86) The information contained in the budget should be clearly defined and made understandable for the public. ('90) The district budget should reflect an appropriate balance between funding for academic achievement and student services. (2003)

Counseling: should include both physical and mental health. LWVSD supports the concept of school-based health clinics, without limitations as to services offered. Guidance and Counseling programs should meet the needs of all students. ('90) Schools should provide a comprehensive quality counseling program for all students in grades K-12, which is developmental and systematic in nature, sequential, clearly defined and accountable, and proactive and preventive in its focus. The program should be in line with national, state, and county professional standards. A collaborative district and community counseling and guidance advisory committee should be established. (2003)

Health Education & Fitness: The School District should ensure required physical education, nutrition, and healthy living classes and implement policies that positively impact nutrition and health. Vending machines in schools should contain only nutritious food and drinks. (2003)

Referral Resources: The District should develop a central database of referral resources for student services, available to staff, students, and the community. ('03)

Early Childhood Education ('11)

San Diego Unified School District is a pre-kindergarten through grade twelve school district.

- Pre-K teachers and administrators should collaborate with district and site staff in order to achieve a seamless continuum of curriculum and instruction.
- The collaboration should include a decision-making process regarding staff development activities, the distribution of funds allocated to school sites, and other relevant issues and programs.
- School readiness programs should provide universal access to preschools, be developmentally appropriate, voluntary and staffed with highly qualified personnel.
- Outreach to and support for parents of young children should be instituted to enable them to contribute to their child's readiness to learn.

Housing

The League of Women Voters of San Diego supports:

- the development of economically and racially balanced communities in all parts of the city as well as in newly developing areas;
- inclusionary zoning as a tool to implement a balanced community policy;
- the use of city-owned land to facilitate the development of low and moderate income housing which includes the following guidelines:
 - a. long-term leases to developers with discounts to encourage and enable maximum development of low and moderate-income units
 - b. a minimum of 30% of the units in every development to be made available for low and moderate income housing at rentals set at HUD Section 8 existing fair market rates
- below-market financing should be obtained wherever feasible;
- a more active role by the City of San Diego in the application for and utilization of available state and federal subsidy programs and innovative financing in order to increase the supply of low and moderate income housing;
- restrictive codes or ordinances that would slow down the conversion of apartments to condominiums;
- public housing as a high priority to assist low income family, elderly, and handicapped households;
- modifications in the municipal code and zoning regulations that would facilitate the development of ('83, '93) manufactured or modular housing in order to increase the supply of low and moderate income housing;
- development of manufactured or modular housing in city-owned land to accommodate low and moderate income households. ('78)

Libraries

Finance: The LWVSD strongly supports the free use of basic library services. Public libraries are an obligation of local government. City funds must be augmented with state and federal funds. Additional methods to raise library funds also must be explored.

If there is a Board of Library Commissioners, it should have significant, clearly defined responsibilities. Highest priority in budget appropriations should be given first to the acquisition of materials and secondly to staff salaries that are competitive with those of comparable jurisdictions and with city departments.

The LWVSD supports consolidation of City and County library systems, either complete or by major function. ('81)

Central Library Siting: Although cost of a new building is an important factor, it is more important to build a Central Library large enough to encompass all present and projected functions for a minimum of 50 years. It is very important that:

- the Central Library collects and disseminates educational, cultural and recreational material for San Diego County, and that it serves the needs of business, government and society in general;
- on-site parking be available if cost of construction is not a factor. However, it is not important that it be free to patrons;
- this Library be sited near existing and planned public transportation.

Factors in siting a Central Library, listed in order of importance: size; cost; architecture; public transportation; downtown parking; part of civic center complex; near cultural buildings; walking distance from home or business; near residential area. ('89)

Needs of the Seriously Mentally Ill

LWVSD supports city government responsibility for:

- streamlining access to and coordination of services such as income; housing, medical, social and employment services and giving recognition to the special needs of seriously mentally ill people for affordable housing;
- providing for shelters which meet the special needs of seriously mentally ill people who are homeless;
- involvement in buying or leasing the different types of housing needed by seriously mentally ill people; making use of the Housing Trust Fund for such housing; stimulating the private sector to provide housing opportunities for seriously mentally ill people by removing zoning barriers and speeding up permit acquisitions;
- appropriate education, training, special support and referral services to enable police to respond effectively to disturbances involving seriously mentally ill people. This should be a consolidated county-wide effort;
- an action-oriented Blue Ribbon Task Force to attack the problems of seriously mentally ill people including that of seriously mentally ill people who are homeless;

- better coordination of mental health services by the city and county governments and the private sector. ('94)

III. LAND USE AND PLANNING

The League of Women Voters of San Diego supports Planning Policies that will produce well-planned communities. Local governmental bodies should promote citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of these plans. ('91)

Urban Development

Urban Renewal: City government has the responsibility for planning, influencing and implementing sound community development on a comprehensive, long-range and flexible basis. In order to prevent and cure urban deterioration, local government should become involved in local programs, provide adequate funds to enforce the municipal housing code, encourage private participation in projects, and support activities to promote public understanding of rehabilitation and renewal.

Development should be based on criteria considering community's needs, financial soundness, and aesthetic and social needs.

Flexible land use controls should be used to meet specific planning problems and to encourage variety in land uses and in the types and prices of housing in all city neighborhoods. ('71)

Government should support measures to prevent and cure urban deterioration. Measures should include the development and/or renovation of the existing urban area before new areas are opened for development and encouraging the involvement of both government and private interests. ('72) Long-term leases should be favored over the sale of city-owned land. ('79)

Citizen Participation: Committees representative of the entire city should participate in planning for newly developing communities.

Laws: All laws relating to planning and zoning in San Diego should be compiled into a single reference source. The application of state law to local planning and zoning should be clarified by city charter revision and adoption of regulations by local ordinance.

Community Development: Sound community development should first meet a community need and then be evaluated with the following criteria:

- allow for needed change;
- consider the unique population for the community;
- contribute to an aesthetically pleasing environment;
- be financially feasible;
- contribute to pride in the community;

- promote the opportunity for the inclusion throughout the community of various ethnic, minority and economic groups;
- take into consideration the physical nature of the community.

Centre City Development

The League of Women Voters of San Diego supports the revitalization of the downtown area of San Diego. Development of the Centre City should be pursued with an emphasis on human concerns. The goal should be a 24 hour community including:

- a variety of housing for all income levels;
- office and government buildings;
- commercial services for downtown residents and workers;
- unique commercial opportunities such as a farmer's market, shops in historic buildings, restaurants, cultural facilities;
- aesthetically planned open space offering opportunities both for recreation and for passive pursuits, such as mini-parks, and a well landscaped waterfront;
- provision of services appropriate to the needs of the residents.

A transportation system for Centre City should be planned in conjunction with a regional system. Mini-buses are a desirable means of transportation within Centre City. ('78)

Parking: Parking requirements for commercial and office buildings should be established to coordinate with a regional transportation system, in order to ease transportation problems within Centre City. ('84)

Master Plan: Development of the Centre City should follow a master plan in order to provide cohesion among projects. The master plan should be formulated with community and citizen involvement, using realistic cost estimates and employing sound fiscal planning. Design criteria consistent with the urban plan and a size adequate to accommodate the desired function are crucial for a public facility. Development may be encouraged through speeding the permit process and through tax incentives. Large-scale demolition and land clearance are not desirable. Preservation of old buildings could be encouraged through tax incentives and selective code relaxation. Present residents should not be displaced from Centre City. Relocating individuals within the Centre City who have been displaced by urban renewal is ultimately the responsibility of city government. ('84)

Parks

Local government has the responsibility to provide a public park system for the citizens of San Diego. Planning should include evaluation of all available methods of acquiring and retaining parklands. There should be improved procedures for citizen participation in decisions regarding the park system. (before 1971) The city government should employ a qualified individual, whose sole responsibility is to promote and coordinate the various facets of parklands, excluding recreation. (83)

Parkland Acquisition: In evaluating methods of financing parkland acquisition, additional bonding should be considered; assessment districts should be used as a last resort. (before 1971)

Parklands should be acquired early and city government should implement the ordinance requiring a builder to contribute money or land appropriate for parks. (before 1971) Streets should be vacated as a means of adding to parkland. In order to prevent loss of parklands, local government should provide for dedication of parks at the time of acquisition or designation. ('76) The League supports the continuation of development of local park and recreational facilities with emphasis on providing services to those areas that currently are deficient. ('91)

The City Charter should be amended to remove authority from the Council to place through roads in parks, retaining the need for a vote by 2/3 of the electorate to use parklands for a non-park purpose such as through roads or mass transit. Similarly, open space owned by the City and acquired for park purposes should also be dedicated and protected from use for through roads or mass transit. ('76) Parkland, including open space acquired for park purposes, should not be used for long-term leasing to non-profit recreational organizations or to commercial enterprises. ('83)

Sweetwater Marsh: The League supports the restoration, enhancement, preservation, and the protection of the wetlands within the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. Maximum public access to the area that is consistent with the preservation of the wetlands should be available. ('91)

Citizens should participate in the formation of park policy with improved procedures for making their needs and recommendations known to those responsible for making final recommendations and policy. ('83)

Balboa Park ('11)

The League of Women Voters of San Diego supports the preservation and enhancement of the cultural, recreational and passive resources off Balboa Park to meet the needs of the surrounding community and region while respecting its physical, cultural and historical environment. The pueblo lands set aside as a permanent preserve should be held in trust forever for the purpose of a free and public park and for not other purposes.

League supports:

- the expansion of parking facilities outside the core of the park in order to enhance the pedestrian experience within the park. A comprehensive tram system should ensure accessibility for the disabled, seniors and families with small children.
- fiscal decisions that will preserve Balboa Park as an affordable experience for all citizens of San Diego.
- preservation of the historic aspect of the architecture, landscape and culture of Balboa Park including plant preservation, maintenance and replacement with no net loss of landscape and open space.

- public access to meetings and to information regarding the operations and activities of the Balboa Park Conservancy and/or any other public/private park management and funding organization acting for the City with the goal of meeting the highest standard in transparency and accountability.
- inclusion of a sunset provision in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which would require regular review and renewal of a conservancy.

San Diego Unified Port District

The San Diego Unified Port District should include protection of the natural environment as a primary responsibility, emphasize recreation for the general public, maintain a balance of maritime commerce and other business, and be accountable and responsive to the member cities and to the public.

- the Port District Act of 1962 should be amended to include protection of the natural environment as a primary responsibility;
- recreation for the general public, free or at minimal cost should have high priority in decisions about the use of port land and waterways;
- the District should encourage maritime commerce. A balance of business tenants including water-related industries should be maintained;
- member cities should share in surplus funds of the District;
- commissioners should be appointed by the city councils of member cities. The optimal number of commissioners is seven, with three commissioners representing San Diego and one commissioner each for the cities of Chula Vista, Coronado, Imperial Beach and National City. ('91)

Transportation

The LWVSD supports an expanded public transit system, transit innovations with the possibility of additional fares for special (*such as door-to door*) services, and the encouragement of vehicle pooling. However, first priority should be given to the maintenance of streets and freeways with new construction only where essential.

The increased costs of an expanded public transit system should continue to be shared between governmental subsidies and the fare box. Local revenue is preferred in the following order: increased gasoline tax, general fund, payroll tax, and sales tax. A decrease in service should only be considered when necessary for overall efficiency.

Decisions on local public transit services should be made locally and decisions on regional public transit services should be made on a regional basis with coordination and cooperation among the decision-making bodies.

Social Service Transit: The public transit system should bear the major responsibility for providing social service transit for the elderly and handicapped in the most cost-effective manner. LWVSD supports the cooperation of all agencies (public and private) that provide social service transit and the integration of their planning functions. ('80)

SAN DIEGO/TIJUANA INTER-RELATIONS

The LWVSD strongly favors efforts to foster greater communication, understanding, and cooperation between San Diego and Tijuana; all levels of government should be involved. The areas in which there is the most urgent need for cooperation are sewage and water quality. ('82)