

League of Women Voters of Dallas

Local Positions

I. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A. Appointed Boards and Commissions, City and County (1972 – 73). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. Appointment of qualified citizens who will represent the community and can serve under established term, attendance and conflict of interest policies
2. Orientation for prospective and new board members
3. Regular meeting times and places convenient for members, clients and visitors
4. Regular reporting to City Council or Commissioners' Court of board's activities and recommendations for change

B. City Government

1. Council Manager system of government (1979-80; PPR 1993-94, 2002-2003). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports the Council Manager system of government in Dallas with a strong City Council including:

- recognition that the Mayor and City Council members are full-time positions and creation of an independent compensation commission to periodically evaluate mayoral and council compensation
- authorization of City Council members to hire their own staff
- extension of City Council member terms to 4 years
- authorization of the City Manager, Mayor and/or 3 City Council members to put an item on the City Council agenda
- adjustment of the budgetary process to allow earlier and more input from City Council members, including City Council involvement in initial planning of annual budget priorities and guidelines
- creation of a comprehensive plan for the City by the City Manager in consultation with the Mayor, City Council and other governmental entities
- creation of a permanent comprehensive city planning department headed by a professional planner
- inclusion of the requirement for an ethics commission in the City charter
- provision for an ongoing charter review process
- no allocation of any portion of the City budget to individual City Council members to be spent in their districts
- neither the Mayor nor any City Council member having veto power

2. Citizen participation in the city budget process (1986-88). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

- provisions for systematic, public participation, early in the budget-making process, in indicating annual budget priorities and guidelines
- use of a variety of approaches to help citizens acquire necessary skills and knowledge for effective participation

- action by the city to give citizens the opportunity to participate by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible

3. Police/Community relations (PPR 1996). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

- the Dallas Police Department in its primary role of law enforcement and crime prevention
- expansion of police-community programs by coordination with other city, state and federal agencies to use storefront operations to attack crime-causing problems; encouragement of citizen participation in all community service programs; and adequate funding for police officers and community programs
- greater emphasis on human relations training for both recruits and veteran officers by using trained human relations professionals to give input and evaluate courses offered by the Police Academy and pre- and post-testing of cadets to evaluate effectiveness of training
- a Citizens' Police Review Board with expanded functions to include a widened scope of complaints to be reviewed automatically and strengthened subpoena power by removing the veto ability from the technical advisory committee and allowing police officers who are the subjects of complaints to be subpoenaed

4. Bill of Rights (PPR 1996). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports adoption by the Dallas City Council of a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. The Dallas Bill of Rights and Responsibilities is a call to create a new social contract, a new understanding between the people of our City and our City government.

This Bill of Rights and Responsibilities derives its authority from the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights. Amendment IX says the enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people. Amendment X says powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people. State and federal sovereignty does not relieve us of the obligation to govern ourselves.

The League of Women Voters of Dallas interprets the U.S. Bill of Rights proactively. We not only retain rights and powers over our own lives and civic institutions, but also have the obligation to exercise those rights.

- participation: all residents of the City of Dallas, 18 years old and older, shall have the right to vote for representatives, in fairly apportioned districts, for all public policy decision-making bodies which affect their welfare; and they shall be free to seek public office and serve as public representatives
- environment: the City of Dallas shall guarantee clean air and water, freedom from exposure to environmental hazards indoors, and preservation and conservation of natural open spaces and parks
- conscience and expression: the City of Dallas shall make no law establishing a religion nor prohibiting the free exercise of religious conscience, nor make a law which interferes with the rights of freedom of speech, of freedom of the press, to petition the government or to assemble peacefully
- privacy: the City of Dallas shall protect an individual's right to privacy including choice in human reproduction and the use of life support systems

- nondiscrimination: the City of Dallas shall not, directly or indirectly, discriminate against persons because of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, national origin or citizenship status
- children: every child is entitled to have basic needs met, such as: food, clothing, health care, attention, education, nurturing, freedom from exploitation and a community advocate to see that these rights are implemented
- safety: the City of Dallas shall maintain a safe environment for individuals, free from threats, violence, abuse or official misconduct. This right shall be guaranteed by independent civilian oversight
- education: the City of Dallas shall guarantee that every person has access to free public education
- housing: adequate shelter from the elements shall be the right of every person

C. County Government. The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. County road work priorities based on traffic volume and street conditions, but with consideration also given to citizen requests and recommendations resulting from meetings between Commissioners, local officials and civic leaders (1984, PPR 1996)
2. Efficient registration and election procedures to insure trust and accountability in the election process, including: (2002-04)
 - registration compliance with the National Voter Registration Act by the Department of Public Safety and other public service agencies and increased access to registration forms in libraries, high schools and other academic institutions, post offices, public service agencies and citizenship ceremonies
 - timely processing of registration applications
 - more effective recruitment of election judges and clerks by advertising the need for election judges and clerks and increasing their pay
 - more effective training of Election and Registrar Departments' personnel, election judges and election clerks, including payment for training of election judges and clerks
 - Early Voting and Election Day Voting:
 - increased efforts to publicize locations of polling places in advance of elections
 - wider distribution of sample ballots and voter education materials
 - improved access to registration status and election process information by voters, judges and clerks at polling places on Election Day
 - efforts to assure accuracy of vote counting and recounting
 - efforts to insure accessibility of polling places for physically challenged citizens
 - Mail Ballot Voting: reform of mail ballot process to achieve integrity of ballot, elimination of the courier process for collection of mail ballots, keeping the identity of persons who have applied for mail ballot as a non-public record until after the election and making available more education about the mail ballot process

D. Economic Conversion (PPR 1996). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. Involvement of the federal, state and local governments in the process of economic conversion from military industry to the production of civilian goods, services and facilities
2. Action by local governments and the private sector to provide financial incentives, educational opportunities and organizational coordination to facilitate economic conversion
3. Regional private/public partnership for planning and implementing economic conversion

II. SOCIAL POLICY

A. Education. The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. School policies and practices which will continue to improve the quality of education in the Dallas Independent School District (DISD)
2. A free interchange of information between school officials and the community (1959-63)
3. Quality integrated schools in the Dallas area (1971-72, updated 1981, 1990)
 - positive leadership by the school trustees, Superintendent and principals, together with the cooperation of the media, religious, business and political leaders and promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue among parents, teachers, students and principals aimed at planning and implementing school integration
 - a curriculum designed to improve understanding among all races and cultures; various types of magnet schools; preservation of naturally integrated neighborhood schools; and effective measures to prevent discrimination in classrooms, teacher assignments and school activities
 - use of buses when necessary; an integration plan equally shared by the whole metropolitan area
 - a tax rate adequate to finance quality, integrated education
4. Policies and measures of the DISD aimed at the achievement of sound mental health practices (1968-69, PPR 1990), including: special education classes as needed for the emotionally disturbed, in-service training for school nurses and teachers on recognition of emotional disturbance in students, consultation with mental health personnel and agencies, mental health counseling for students in all grades, and communication with and education of parents on mental health goals in the schools
5. A curriculum starting in primary grades and continuing through high school on age-appropriate life skills and responsibilities including problem solving, communication, parenting, substance abuse, sex education, and violence prevention (1991-93)
6. Abolition of corporal punishment as a means of discipline management in schools. (PPR 1994)

B. Housing. The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. Fair, affordable housing for all who need it, supplied throughout the region by the combined efforts of all government entities and the private sector
2. Effective measures by the public and private sectors to ensure an adequate and habitable housing stock, stable neighborhoods and community redevelopment with sufficient services to provide a decent quality of life
3. Fair enforcement of both landlords' and tenants' rights and obligations
4. Affordable housing for the very low-to-moderate income families (1996):
 - increased accountability for public funds that are designated to foster home ownership for low-to-moderate income families in Dallas
 - a single point of contact to serve as a clearinghouse for information on, registration for, and the promotion of various programs and entities that work to foster home ownership for very low-to-moderate income households in Dallas
 - a task force of government and private sector groups to work on establishing a responsible entity to

- act as clearinghouse for information
- promote programs
- promote coordination and cooperation among the various entities and the consolidation of programs and efforts, as appropriate for programmatic and cost effectiveness
- monitor results of programs for measurable outcomes and cost
- supervise the education of participants, coordinate counseling programs for new buyers and provide follow-up support to home owners

C. Health Services (1968 – 70). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. Establishment of comprehensive mental health services in Dallas County to provide continuity of care to all residents, including:
 - the use of public funds to develop and support mental health services
 - conduct research
 - train personnel with special attention to the mental health needs of children and adolescents, including adequate psychiatric treatment and residential facilities
2. Maternal and child health measures, including:
 - public education on maternal and child health problems
 - adequately staffed and easily accessible, quality maternal and child health facilities with decentralized services
 - services to preschool children in child health clinics
 - the provision of family planning services as a regular part of medical care
 - the use of public funds for family planning
3. Reorganization of the City of Dallas and Dallas County Public Health Departments allowing for a merger for some or all services (PPR 1992, 1996)

D. Resources for Children and Youth (1991 – 93). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. Comprehensive health and human services policies for and coordinated among the City of Dallas, Dallas County, and the DISD, including a goal to strengthen families of all kinds
2. A budget process at each level of government (City, County, school districts) that addresses issues and service needs as well as departmental needs, sets a high priority on prevention programs, and is preceded by coordinated strategic planning and goal setting
3. Action by government agencies and the private sector to facilitate better coordination and accessibility of programs serving youth, such as:
 - the establishment of a network of youth serving agencies in neighborhood centers throughout Dallas County
 - careful and continuous strategic planning for these centers to assure basic core services, including adequate funding
 - services that are comprehensive and flexible, decentralized, family and prevention oriented, and outcome focused
4. Child care that:
 - is affordable, high quality, accessible and safe
 - is subsidized by the City for needy parents and guardians, with some provision by the City for training providers
 - has developmentally appropriate programs and facilities

- has City-provided and coordinated information services
 - includes the establishment of programs by industry, churches and other private groups through encouragement by the City (PPR 1997)
5. Administration of Juvenile Justice in Dallas County: Continuing efforts to encourage and implement citizens' involvement in the juvenile justice system (PPR 1995)

III. NATURAL RESOURCES

A. Solid Waste (1972 – 73). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports long range solid waste planning with emphasis on recycling and use of newest technology, including:

1. Separation of solid waste at the source until community materials separation and recovery stations are available
2. Continued limited use of sanitary landfills in strict compliance with state regulations
3. Regional planning and full participation in a regional program

B. Regional Planning (1976, PPR 1994). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports NCTCOG providing regional services for governmental functions affecting the natural environment and cooperation with effective regional planning that involves participation of all local governments in the region.

C. Transportation (1973-74, 1976-78, PPR 1993). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports mass transportation as an essential public service, subsidized from public funds as necessary, including:

1. A balanced system, which provides for alternate and coordinated forms of transportation while preserving and improving environmental quality
2. Citizen education and participation early and during the entire planning process through consistent communication between government and its constituents
3. Coordination of transportation into a regional system which has a board of directors composed of private citizens and elected officials representing participating cities and counties, the power to carry out its transportation functions through the action of a board of directors, and the power to levy a sales tax up to 1%

D. Urban Planning (1968-69, updated 1970-71, 1973-74, 1984, 2004). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. An effective city-wide comprehensive planning program including:
 - a high quality of development, redevelopment, and preservation
 - involvement of all segments of the Dallas community in decisions at all stages of planning including defining community values; setting neighborhood goals, objectives and priorities; suggesting implementation tools; and providing mechanisms for continuous feedback and periodic review
 - the completion of a community plan for each standard statistical community
 - protecting and fostering stable and redeveloping residential areas and communities
 - a diverse and attractive urban form with ample open space in all areas, increased landscaping in commercial and high-density areas, and maintenance of sites through follow-up code enforcement

- appropriate incentives to encourage private sector provision of infrastructure and amenities
 - consideration of the impact of zoning changes and other land use decisions on the quality, cost and availability of housing
 - a strong and qualified urban planning staff to spearhead the work of the community in planning, zoning, transportation and other related issues
 - building, maintaining and updating a database of urban information, including the census
2. Carefully planned public acquisition of flood plain lands (1970 - 71)
 3. Enforcement of laws affecting zoning in flood plain lands not in public ownership (1970-71)
 4. Comprehensive subdivision regulations regarding open space and preservation of natural stream corridors (1970-71)
 5. Cooperation with effective regional planning

E. Fair Park (PPR 1993, 1999). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. Maximizing the use and attractiveness of Fair Park
2. Improvement of the management of Fair Park through:
 - centralized and entrepreneurial management methods
 - increased cooperation among the city, the park department and the various museums at Fair Park
 - income generation by placing a surcharge on special events and/or leasing Park facilities while maintaining free admission to the Park
3. Strengthened relationship between Fair Park and the surrounding neighborhood by:
 - protection of existing housing stock
 - a better link between Fair Park, downtown and the Arts District
 - improved security in the neighborhood
 - employment of more area residents
 - promoting events geared to the neighborhood

F. Trinity River Corridor (1994-95). The League of Women Voters of Dallas supports:

1. Flood damage reduction
 - use of a system-wide approach in decision-making by planners, developers and implementing agencies, with the inclusion of plans for repairing and raising existing levees
 - preference for non-structural methods for future flood damage reduction
 - discouragement of future filling and development in the flood plain
 - enforcement and city-wide application of existing regional fill permits and flood plain ordinances
 - implementation of only cost-effective projects with positive environmental benefits
 - use of funding from all available sources
 - allowance in the 100-year flood plain of only flood-friendly recreational and horticultural-related structures
 - restriction from the flood plain of all residential, business, educational, and research and development centers
 - retaining areas bought out by the city for park and flood damage reduction purposes rather than selling them for future development

- avoidance of taking existing or proposed parklands for the design, construction or relocation of any Trinity River levee
- a policy that forbids the inclusion of a “grandfather clause” for future levees or other structural flood solutions, without regard for cost, who pays or effects on the environment or residents downstream
- establishment of a voluntary relocation and buy-out program for businesses and residents in the flood plain, plus the enactment of a city ordinance to allow payment at a fair market price and financial incentive for property owners

2. Transportation

- compatibility with development of park and open space facilities
- provision of convenient, safe and practical access to recreation areas from surrounding neighborhoods
- ensurance that solutions do not become safety and noise barriers to recreation/open space uses
- preservation of natural areas, such as forests, wetlands and wildlife habitats
- ensurance of air and water quality in the corridor and adjoining neighborhoods
- location of a high-speed highway without the main consideration being the availability of federal transportation funds that might be leveraged for recreational trail enhancement and levee building
- a city search for all possible sources of funding for transportation solutions

3. Economic Development

- support and commitment of financial and other resources to encourage economic development in Southern and West Dallas communities along the Trinity River
- projects appropriate to the corridor and the natural environment and compatible with the character of existing neighborhoods
- inclusion of area residents and business owners in decision-making
- residential and non-residential mixed-use development
- upgraded infrastructure and zoning to further urban revitalization and discourage incompatible land use

4. Recreation and open space

- development of regional plans for coordinating open space development in the Trinity River Basin (1970-71, PPR 1999)
- inclusion of water amenities, such as off channel lakes, fountains and reflecting pools in Trinity Park, providing environmental considerations such as water quality and sediment contamination are recognized and solved (1994-95, PPR 1999)
- development of park and open space facilities and features, focusing on preservation of the natural environment and existing forests and providing for both active and passive recreational opportunities (1994-95, PPR 1999)
- high priority for the purchase of parks and open space in the flood plain, given a limited or one-time-only opportunity (1994-95, PPR 1999)
- closed, environmentally safe landfills used as park and open spaces (1994-95, PPR 1999)
- preservation of the “Great Trinity Forest” to be made accessible by an environmentally sensitive trail system with only footpaths in the high quality forest areas (1994-95, PPR 1999)

- public costs of the construction and maintenance of the project should not to exceed its public benefits (1994-95)
5. Environmental restoration and preservation (1994-95)
- efforts to clean up the areas of the river where environmental degradation has taken place
 - increased and strengthened enforcement of city codes with an increase in fines for illegal dumping
 - upgraded zoning to address incompatible land use
 - public education program about solutions to illegal dumping, littering and storm drain dumping
 - removal of old landfills, illegal fills, litter and toxic dumping
 - restoration of wetlands, forests and natural areas
 - clean-up and monitoring of air and water pollution
 - a work program for juveniles and violators on work release to do environmental preservation and restoration