

LWVUS IMMIGRATION STUDY

In 2006, the LWVUS began a two year study of immigration in the United states. As with all studies undertaken by the LWV, the goal was to develop a “position” about that issue which would become the official position of the League.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Underlying values and principles regarding immigration

Reasons for migration from other countries, including but not limited to:

- Effects of global interdependence on migration

- Motivation of refugees and asylees

- Motivation of other immigrants

Current federal immigration policy, including but not limited to:

- Overview

- Effectiveness in uniting families

- Effectiveness in meeting needs of business

- Effectiveness of enforcement

Impact of immigration, including but not limited to:

- Economic effects of authorized and unauthorized immigration

- Diversity

- Inclusion of immigrants in American Society

STUDY TIMELINE

2006 to September, 2008 – Development of study materials by the Committee, for submission to the local Leagues

September, 2007 to January, 2008 – Local Leagues form consensus

February 1, 2008 – Deadline for the LWVUS to receive consensus response forms

February 1, 2008 to March 20, 2008 – Immigration Study Committee formulates position

STUDY MATERIALS

The Committee developed materials to assist members nationwide and their communities, in studying the issue of immigration. These included several background papers and briefs, consensus questions along with background information for same, and an extensive reading list.

LOCAL LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

The League of Women Voters of Mason County convened a study group of interested members and persons from the community, in the fall of 2007, in order to consider the consensus questions submitted by the LWVUS Committee. Through considerable discussion, respectful disagreement on opinions, the group reached consensus on all but two issues – the issuance of a national identity card and the building of physical barriers (such as fences) at the border.

Our finalized consensus form was submitted to LWVUS in January, 2008, along with the forms from Leagues all over the United States.

In February, 2008, the Mason County Study Group hosted a program at the regular, monthly meeting,

to which community members were invited. The results of our consensus discussions were presented and a panel of seven invited guests answered questions and spoke about their participation, at the local level, in immigration issues. The panel consisted of: Jim Barrett, Under-Sheriff, Mason County Sheriff's Dept; Steve Warner, Principal, Evergreen Elementary School, Shelton; Ricardo del Bosque, Home Visitor for the Migrant Education Program; Jenny Blumenstein, Adult Program Coordinator, Mason County Literacy; Father Jeff Sells, Rector, St. David's Episcopal Church; Oscar Plazas, Health Resource Coordinator, CHOICE Regional Health Network; and Lisa Seifert, Immigration Attorney, Seifert Law Offices.

LWVUS POSITION ON IMMIGRATION

In April, 2008, the National Board of LWVUS announced the official position of the League, resulting from the compilation of consensus forms from local Leagues across the United States. It is as follows:

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families, meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the United States, and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the United States.

To complement these goals the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants, already in the country, to earn legal status.

The League supports federal payments, to impacted communities, to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- Family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens;
- Flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries;
- Economic, business, and employment needs in the United States;
- Education and training needs of the United States;
- Lack of a history of serious criminal activity.

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment. With regard to administration and enforcement, the League supports:

- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status;
- Verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers;
- Significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers;
- Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies;

- More effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States; and
- Increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the United States to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics, and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity.