

PROGRAM PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2021 - 2023

Recommended items for 2021 – 2023: *Note that these items will be addressed at Convention. They require a majority vote to adopt.*

Current Positions

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey (LWVNJ) Board of Directors recommends retaining all current positions for the 2021 – 2023 biennium. The Board's decision to retain all positions was based on responses from 24 local Leagues.

Recommended Studies and Updates

The board does not recommend any new studies or updates.

Non-Recommended Items for 2021 - 2023

Two possible studies were given serious consideration by the board.

1. The strongest possibility came for two Leagues (Monroe and Ridgewood) advocating for a **study of alternative voting methods**. Both Leagues actually used the specific term "rank choice voting" (equivalent to instant runoff) but initiating a study of a specific method carries the risk of having a foregone conclusion, and would exclude other voting methods such as approval voting (voters vote for as many candidates as they "approve of", and the one with the most votes wins), score voting (voters give each candidate a score, and the highest average wins), proportional voting (common in Europe, by party, but with many variants).

If approved at Convention, the scope would have to be broad enough as to include the major kinds of voting methods, but narrow enough as to exclude things like vote by mail and early voting, which we already support (and which are sometimes included under the heading of alternative voting methods).

Scope (Ridgewood – Monroe's is much briefer. They also mention open primaries):
National also supports ranked choice voting. However, it does not specify a particular system. The objective of this study would be to learn about various ways ranked choice voting works and come up with recommendations for New Jersey. We will be watching an Oregon League webinar on the subject.

They have members willing to work on this study.

Board decision: Not recommended.

Rationale: We already have positions that come close to letting us advocate in these areas, especially the national League position adopted at the last convention that includes support for encouraging "those with minority opinions to participate", maximizing "effective votes/minimize wasted votes", and "electoral methods that provide the broadest voter

representation possible and are expressive of voter choices". The national position does not mention rank choice voting – support (if any) is for the general idea that it might help achieve one of these goals.

The board felt that a detailed white paper on the various methods and their implications in New Jersey could provide a basis for education and perhaps advocacy on these topics without the challenges and time commitment needed to implement a study on the topic.

2. The other possible study is of **Civics Education**, by Camden County.

Scope: As part of the background research, the study committee would determine current practices. The actual study would:

Determine the content we would like to see covered, at grade appropriate levels.

Determine how much time should be devoted to civics education per grade level.

Several members were willing to work on the committee. They didn't volunteer to chair it.

Board decision: Not recommended.

Rationale: We already have a position that says "The New Jersey State Board of Education and the New Jersey Department of Education should set curriculum content standards to assure that all students are exposed to an educational program, which enables them to become effective, productive citizens. The standards set by the state should be broad discipline and content standards rather than detailed curriculum requirements". The Camden County study included interest in the details, like content and curriculum requirements (such as how much time at each grade level).

The board felt that trying to establish such details would be difficult and would contradict our existing position. The latter is not an absolute barrier, as positions can change, but the board did not feel that a study to determine specifics of what to teach and when would be sufficiently valuable as to support.

Other Non-Recommended Items for 2021 - 2023

LWV of Somerset and Hunterdon Counties proposed a **Security of Voting Study**

Comment: We already support some of these methods (note that all advocacy stops during a study on a topic – the fact of a study presumes that we don't yet know what to support).

The scope is very broad and could be complicated to carry out.

Teaneck LWV proposes a study of **domestic terrorism and related issues:**

Comment: They have no members willing to serve. The actual scope was primarily police reform. The Board was not sure why that is considered domestic terrorism. On the advice of the LWVNJ Social Policy Committee, the League has signed on to legislation which requires access to law enforcement disciplinary records; and requires such records to be retained for a

certain amount of time. We are already able to advocate on this issue based on LWVNJ policy.

BHNPS has a one line study proposal: **Reforming the look of the ballot**

Comment: We are already acting on this as a partner in the Better Ballots Campaign. A study would stop advocacy until it was completed and could be too late.

Atlantic County suggested a study of **Workplace Health and Safety: Workplace Health and Safety**

Comment: Recommended by just one League. Not our core mission.

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Updates suggested in the check boxes and/or the comment section

In addition to these specifics, Leagues used the "update" check box rather liberally. They also added various comments. These are just listed here, since there was no basis to formally recommend any of them given their presentation.

Administration of Justice Section

Family Court
Mediation
Juvenile justice

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Education Section

Charter Schools
Private school choice
School district regionalization
State role in achieving quality education
Teacher certification and professional development
Tenure

Comment: At least one League checked the "Update" box for all of these, so all are listed. The one topic commonly mentioned is Charter Schools, which we updated 6 years ago, but there is no clearly-formulated proposal that states what we should be studying. Ridgewood asked for a "study on Charter School funding", but we already have a

position on charter school funding. To qualify for serious consideration, it is critical to explain why the existing position is inadequate or needs review. In their recommendation, they write, "There was much concern regarding the funding of Charter Schools and its possible drain on funding for public schools." Again, a reasonable concern, but wouldn't our existing position address this? Charter Schools are public schools.

Others made statements of concern, and suggestions for what should be in the position, but we did not see a study or update proposal, with scope, and willingness to work on it, so none are recommended.

Fiscal Policy

Again, at least one League asked for an update of every position "since it has been a long time".

- Dedication of taxes
- Public School Funding
- Tax and spending limits
- Tax and spending policy

Government

Several Leagues suggested dropping the Lieutenant Governor position and to drop the voting rights for probationers and Parolees position (presumably no longer needed). The board is reluctant to recommend dropping positions without a careful review, as they may be needed in the future. The Lt. Gov. law, in particular, still requires a midterm election if the Governor is replaced – our position strongly opposes that idea.

- Lt. Governor
- Structure and procedures
- Voting rights for probationers and parolees

Natural Resources

Relatively few requests for updates here – Leagues like our NR policies!
Radioactive waste

Social Policy/Transport/WFI

Again, "update everything":
Housing and Zoning

Instate tuition
Drivers' certificates for undocumented drivers
Transportation

Note that non-recommended studies may be addressed at Convention. They require both a majority vote to consider and, if approved for consideration, a 2/3 vote to adopt. They must be moved and seconded by at least three different Leagues or MAL Units and have at least two members prepared to serve on the committee, one of whom agrees to be the chair.

Most of the update requests were just a check of the box on the form. If a local League can obtain support from two other Leagues, write a scope for Convention, and provide strong leadership, they may be able to attain the majority needed to do the update. This generally requires planning in advance – it is difficult to successfully campaign for a non-recommended item starting at Convention.

Comments that suggest additions to or changes to a position cannot be accommodated. Those actions require an update.

We received comments on the look of Study and Action and the fact that it doesn't include all our past advocacy and our many successes, making the League appear "dated". With the help of our program committees, LWVNJ will revise the document to better reflect the work of our organization.

Comments that request information or suggest that the League or a relevant committee look into something will be noted and passed along. While we value your comments and suggestions, program planning is not an ideal venue for them.