



## *League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces*

---

### **POSITION STATEMENTS**

(Adopted April 20, 2013)

**Affordable Housing (2012)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports current and future efforts to increase the availability of safe, decent, and affordable housing for moderate and low income households through the following actions.

- Increase housing options for households in Doña Ana County, including but not limited to seniors, the disabled, and first-time homebuyers.
- Promote a variety of housing styles and types for rent and for purchase that are integrated within the community.
- Support strategies including public and private partnerships and grants, developmental agreements, rehabilitation, fee waivers, density bonuses, and an affordable housing trust fund and land bank.
- Support policies that link transportation, land use, and affordable housing.

**Education (2011)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces (LWVGLC) supports public schools as the primary method of educating students, K-12. Further the League believes that education is the corner stone to perpetuating a strong and viable democracy. The public education system should establish as important goals for all students an understanding of the nature of democracy and the responsibilities of citizenship, the ability to think critically, and the acquisition of skills necessary to continue to learn and function as adults in a complex society.

In addition, the LWVGLC supports the following strategies to ensure the greatest possible academic success for all students:

#### Innovative Practices for Student Success:

- The use of accepted national standards for a common core curriculum that provides a uniform body of knowledge and academic skills for all students, accompanied by flexibility for local school systems to determine how this body of knowledge and skills is imparted to students.
- Alternative educational options for parental choice within the public education system that fit the individual abilities and learning needs of their children.
- Project-based learning focused on developing critical thinking and problem solving skills of students, as well as the use of technology for self-paced learning.
- The engagement of local businesses in formalized one-on-one relationships through partnerships with individual schools that benefit student preparation for the workforce.
- Business initiatives that offer incentives to encourage students to develop career skills, graduate from high school, and seek work schedules that support student attendance at school.

#### Early Childhood Education and Community and Parent Involvement:

- Collaboration among a broad base of community organizations, social service agencies and the local school system to provide parents with programs to assist their children from birth to age 5 in acquiring the language experiences that prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.
- Programs that encourage increased parental involvement in the education of their children that are welcoming and inclusive of parents from economically disadvantaged families.

### Evaluation of Teachers, Students and School Performance

- Student evaluation that focuses on student academic progress rather than rigid standards of proficiency.
- Standardized testing that is focused on measuring student progress in all core academic subject areas over frequent intervals and provides timely results to the teacher to guide the design of instruction to aid individual student progress.
- Teacher performance evaluations that demonstrate the teacher's in-depth knowledge in core academic subjects and pedagogy.
- Evaluation of teachers based on achievement of personal professional goals in the performance evaluation plans developed at the local school system level that includes job performance observations and consideration of student academic progress.
- Termination of teachers and principals using a due process procedure when they no longer meet minimum standards.

### Finances and Funding

- Funding for public education positioned as the highest of state budget priorities.
- A funding formula that provides for a high quality education for all students that is consistently and fairly applied across the state.
- Public education funding being limited to public schools or alternative options that fall within the public school system.
- Funding of programs that foster children's language development, from birth to age 5, for success in kindergarten and beyond.
- Full funding of all state and federal mandates, so as not to place an undue burden on the local school system.

The League recommends that the assessment of the performance of schools and of teachers be based on multiple factors that indicate not only the overall quality of the education provided to the students, but also improvements in student academic growth measured through multiple methods, not solely through standardized tests.

**Mental Health Services in Dona Ana County (2010).** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports an adequately funded mental health care system that provides comprehensive services to the acutely, chronically and seriously mentally ill of all ages; maintains optimal mental health services for all clients; offers mental health services for the homeless; seeks additional funds for preventive services; implements a master plan to integrate services; raises awareness of critical unmet needs; and emphasizes case management.

This position supports:

1. An adequately funded county mental health care system that:
  - provides comprehensive services to the acutely, chronically, and seriously mentally ill of all ages;
  - seeks additional funds to provide preventive services;
  - offers mental health services for the homeless; and
  - maintains optimum mental health services for all clients.
2. Implementation of a master plan that:
  - ensures that there will be a network of integrated services clearly defined and consistent with a community support model;
  - advocates an awareness of and concern about the critical unmet needs within the county; and
  - emphasizes case management that includes assistance with housing, financial entitlements, and rehabilitative and vocational program.
3. Centers for the seriously and chronically mentally ill, apart from the county system.

4. Regulations that provide an adequate length of time for evaluation and treatment of involuntary holds.
5. Model mandatory outpatient care programs with adequate supervisory staff.  
(Adopted by concurrence: League of Women Voters of California, Mental Health Care Position adopted in 1998)

**Solid Waste Recycling** (1999, revised 2008). The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports a program of collecting items suitable for cost-effective recycling. It is important to seek new markets for recycling items, make recycling more accessible, find methods of cost-effective collecting and promote more compensated recycling. The League encourages city and county governmental cooperation toward all-inclusive trash disposal, and more readily accessible recycling for all county residents. Public education should be encouraged to keep citizens informed about all aspects of the program, to promote the purchasing of recycled products in minimal packaging, and to increase participation in the recycling program.

**Metropolitan Court (2007)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that a Metropolitan Court system best serves the requirements of due process and fair trials for the residents of Doña Ana County. Because of the geographic size of the county, the League supports a system that includes satellite courts in outlying areas.

**Branigan Library (1986, 1996 and 2007)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that a public library is a major community resource. Growth in our city and county has outpaced the current library resources. The Library continues to lag behind established standards for public libraries. It is essential that the following actions be taken:

- that the main library facility be expanded in order to enlarge the collection and provide adequate space for staff and program.
- that branch libraries be established to improve geographic access to library services. Possible collaboration with other community entities such as schools, recreation centers or senior centers should be encouraged.
- that the County Government be encouraged to provide more financial support to reflect the widespread use of the library throughout the County.

**County Government (1977, amended 1997)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports the following measures to improve the efficiency and services offered to citizens of Doña Ana County by its county government:

1. development of a comprehensive plan for Doña Ana County that will contain long-range goals and objectives for the county and serve as a guide toward managing expected growth; features of this plan should include provision for orderly development while preserving existing resources;
2. the principle of continued cooperation between the City of Las Cruces and the County of Doña Ana through sharing of facilities and personnel wherever feasible; suggested areas of cooperation include computer time, public library services, Memorial Medical Center, planning, purchasing, detention facilities, police/sheriff personnel and training of personnel.
3. the principle that residents of the City of Las Cruces should recognize their responsibilities toward county government by participating actively in its processes and that county officials in turn act as representatives of all the county's residents.

**Election Procedures (1992, amended 1994, 1997, and 2003)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports:

- implementation of mail ballot elections locally whenever an election meets the requirements in order to reduce costs and increase responses.
- cooperation and coordination among city, county, and school district officials to consolidate and establish polling places so each individual has a single, permanent voting place.
- implementation of split shifts for election-day workers to help alleviate the shortage of poll workers.
- clarification and simplification of options for early and absentee voting procedures. Election officials should send clear notice to the public of the dates each begins and ends and increase publicity of voter options for polling places.
- increased efforts to inform voters of the importance of voting and special campaigns in election years to get out the vote.

**Health Care in Dona Ana County (March, 1976, amended 1999, 2003, 2005)** Adequate health care for all citizens improves the general welfare of our county and ensures the well being of individual residents. The goal is to decrease the number of those without or with inadequate health care insurance in the County. To achieve this objective the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports measures that would improve both access to and adequate funds for primary health care for the residents of Doña Ana County.

To ensure that adequate health care can be provided, the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports efforts to increase the number of health care personnel, improved publicity of existing health care services, guaranteed health care for children, improved health education for the public, increased availability of rural health clinics; provision of public transport of the elderly to public facilities and availability of a prenatal clinic for those with low incomes.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that there should be a meaningful mechanism for public oversight of use of public monies by both hospitals. It is the responsibility of the city and the county to ensure that the terms of the lease between the city, county and administration of Memorial Medical Center that provide access to health care at that institution for indigent are met and that the monies from the trust fund set up by the lease are expended only for health care.

**Land Use Planning (1974, amended 1984, 1996, 1997, 2000, and 2001)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that land use decision making must start with a comprehensive plan that clearly reflects what the citizens have expressed as important goals and desired outcomes for their community. Because our region is encompassed by several separate planning entities (Doña Ana County, City of Las Cruces, La Mesilla and Extra-Territorial Zone) coordination among all of them is essential to ensure regional coherence. In order to facilitate this coordination, comprehensive plans, including future land use plans as necessary, should be specific enough to stand alone separate from detailed zoning regulations and give direction to all planning and zoning commissioners, board of adjustment and other planning decision makers.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces also believes that a comprehensive land use plan must include a clear delineation of responsibilities and authority for execution of the plan. Planning decision makers such as planning and zoning commissioners, city councilors, the Extra-Territorial Authority, the county commissioners and the City Board of Adjustment should be held accountable for their decisions and be ready to show the rationale for their votes.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports preservation of agricultural land and open spaces within Doña Ana County. Because water quantity and quality are global concerns of particular urgency in our arid region, the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces strongly supports protection of water supplies in every phase of planning. Further, we support preservation of all the natural resources we enjoy: air quality, scenic views, night skies, green areas and natural habitats ranging from river valley to desert mesas, arroyos and the surrounding mountains.

The public should be encouraged to participate in the planning process at all levels wherever feasible. In addition, the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that the planning process must include accurate identification of long range and indirect costs to taxpayers that can be shared with and understood by the public prior to approval.

**Municipal Elections (1993, amended 1997)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that

1. if no candidate receives at least 50 percent of the vote, a run-off election will be held between the top two vote-getters within 28 days of the election date; and
2. nominating petitions for the offices of Mayor and Councilor should contain the signatures of at least two percent of the number of qualified electors eligible to vote for that office.

**Water (1996, amended 1997 and 2001)** The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports policies that maintain the viability of ground and surface water supply in the region of the Mesilla Bolson. We recognize the need for urgency of action to protect and conserve our useable water supply. While recognizing the imperative of equitable resolution among competing water users, we urge expeditious conclusion to the ongoing adjudication and supply inventory processes.

We support communication among the various government agencies, as well as Elephant Butte Irrigation District, leading to clear definitions of responsibilities of each entity for managing water resources. While recognizing the continuous need to update data and technology, we urge prompt implementation of plans to utilize the substantial information already available.

We support water conservation regulations with realistic penalties for non-compliance, coupled with a progressive water-use fee schedule, and continuing public education on the need to make water choices.