

## LWVNM IMMIGRATION REFORM ADVOCACY STATEMENT

Adopted by the LWVNM Board 01/18/20

### **LWVNM advocates for**

**The humane treatment of refugees.** The League requests that the federal government adhere to US and International Law that protects the rights of asylum seekers. It is illegal to bar people seeking asylum at any point along the US-Mexico border. We oppose such practices as the Migrant Protection Protocol, and Metering. We oppose the 3<sup>rd</sup> Country Rule applied to Northern Triangle Countries.

**Increased resources to the processing centers.** The League requests more funding be allocated for judges and support staff to speed the asylum process as well as funding for adequate shelters, food, and health care for those waiting to be processed. We oppose the practice of separating families.

**Increased resources to address the root causes of poverty and violence in the Northern Triangle.** The League advocates for increased support of NGO's and Government Agencies such as Anti-corruption Programs, Education and Training Programs, and Small Business Development Programs that have a proven track record of aiding the citizens who are vulnerable to poverty and violence. Until the US addresses the root causes, we will continue to see an increase in asylum seekers.

**Making immigration reform a top priority in the United States.** (see the LWVUS Position on Immigration). We advocate for the development of an immigration system that is efficient, follows due process, and results in minimal backlogs. We oppose deportation of undocumented immigrants who have lived and worked in the US for years contributing to our communities. The League supports an immigration system that applies penalties on employers who hire undocumented workers and allows for an adequate number of temporary work visas that meets the employment and economic needs of our country.

**Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).** It is likely the supreme court will rule to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which grants deferral from deportation to nearly 700,000 young adult immigrants without legal status (Dreamers). That action will result in young adults, who have contributed to our communities, being forced to leave family and friends and "return" to countries where they may never have lived and may not know the language. The league supports creating a path for citizenship for Dreamers.

**The elimination of the use of for-profit prisons to detain migrants and asylum seekers.** Asylum seekers have committed no crime when they come to the U.S border to request asylum, yet they are treated as if they are criminals and detained in conditions worse than many prisons. Reports of racist, anti-immigrant, and even neo-Nazi sentiments among guards and others entrusted with the care of detained immigrants and asylum seekers put them at great risk of abuse. Detainees have reported nooses in their cells, improper and overly restrictive segregation, and inadequate medical care. Since these prisons are profit-making organizations, they are willing to cut back on many basic services, such as food and medical care. Many have died in

detention due to lack of proper medical care. Far too many have resorted to suicide due to desperation and loss of hope.

### **LWVNM Immigration Position – Adopted 2019**

LWVNM supports:

- promoting reunification of immediate families;
- meeting the economic, business and employment needs of the United States;
- providing due process for those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises;
- providing for student visas;
- ensuring fair treatment under the law for all persons;
- incorporating immigrants into our communities by providing access to education;
- endorsing the development of secure identification documents;
- respecting the right of state and local law enforcement personnel to perform their duties without the burden of enforcing federal immigration policies.

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

### **LWVUS Position**

#### **The League's Statement of Position on Immigration, as announced by the National Board, April 2008:**

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.

**Criteria for Legal Admission to the United States.** 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; • Educational program opportunities; and • Lack of a history of serious criminal activity.

**Administration and Enforcement.** 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. The

League supports: • Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status; 81 • 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.

**Unauthorized Immigrants Already in the United States.** 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.

**League History.** The 2006 Convention voted to undertake a study on immigration. After study and consensus, the new position was finalized in 2008 and sent to Members of Congress. In the 111th Congress (2009-2011), the League lobbied in support of the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) that would provide a path to citizenship for young immigrants who complete a college degree or serve in the military, thereby enabling them to be a fully productive part of American society. The legislation passed the House but lacked enough votes to overcome a filibuster in the Senate. Because of a request made in 2016, the League clarified part of its position on immigration “to mean that simple illegal re-entry is not considered a ‘serious crime’ for League advocacy purposes.” In the 115th Congress (2017-2019), the League opposed the rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy by the Trump Administration. In response, the League again advocated for passage of a clean DREAM Act in Congress. The LWVUS Lobby Corps lobbied both the House and the Senate on this issue. The League also opposed the Securing America’s Future Act of 2018, which would have put immigrant youth at risk of deportation while supporting actions at our borders to separate children from their families at the border and funding a wall at our southern border. During the 2018 Convention in Chicago, IL, League members marched in support of immigrants and families while protesting this and other pieces of related legislation. The League also opposed the Trump Administrations “Public Charge Rule,” which directed immigration officials to limit the entrance of immigrants who they deemed would become: more dependent on government funding” to meet their basic human needs.

For more information, contact Meredith Machen, Immigration Chair, League of Women Voters of New Mexico, [projects@lwnm.org](mailto:projects@lwnm.org) or [meredith.machen@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.machen@gmail.com), 505-577-6337

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