



LWVSNM Immigration Position, August 2020

The LWVSNM position supports making immigration reform a top priority in the United States through the following actions:

- ensure fair and humane treatment under the law for all persons;
- support family-based immigration as well as immigration based on qualifications;
- restore fair access, due process, and legal representation to the U.S asylum system for those escaping violence and persecution, including repealing Operation Streamline;
- reunify families and end the deportation of unaccompanied children and teenagers without due process;
- reinstate safe release to family and friends and The Case Management System as an alternative to detention;
- decriminalize undocumented entry and re-entry;
- end deportations of unauthorized immigrants with no U.S. criminal record;
- eliminate the use of for-profit prisons to detain migrants and asylum seekers;
- create a path for citizenship for Dreamers (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals);
- provide for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status;
- provide for student and work visas;
- incorporate immigrants into our communities by providing access to education, health care, social services, and in the event of a national emergency, financial assistance;
- respect the right of state and local law enforcement personnel to perform their duties without the burden of enforcing federal immigration policies;
- increase resources to address the root causes of poverty and violence in Central America or other source countries for immigrants;
- maintain and expand a robust Temporary Protective Status Program for nationals from countries affected by armed conflict and natural disasters.

BACKGROUND:

Since its inception the United States has valued treating those who come to our soil to seek a better life or refuge from persecution with compassion and fairness. Unfortunately, in recent years we have seen the erosion of our laws protecting the rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

In Southern New Mexico we have witnessed the tragic consequences of the previous administration's zero tolerance immigration enforcement policies. The Remain in Mexico Policy, Metering, the 3rd Country Asylum Rule, the deplorable conditions of the detention centers and shelters in Mexico, and the practice of separating families, not only are contrary to the League's Immigration Position, but violate the basic human rights of those seeking asylum.

The Remain in Mexico Program (Migrant Protection Protocols, MPP) forced thousands of people applying for U.S. asylum to return to Mexico while their cases are being processed. U.S. asylum law states that anyone who steps foot in the U.S. at any point along the US-Mexico border may request asylum, yet the practice known as metering limited the number of people who could request asylum at a port of entry. As a result, families have been waiting for months in crowded camps and shelters at border crossings in order not to lose their place in line. Asylum seekers living in these conditions are at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 and becoming sick and dying. In Ciudad Juárez where thousands of asylum seekers are waiting in shelters, reports of kidnappings, rapes, disappearances, and death are common.

Fortunately, the current administration has ended many of the draconian policies implemented by the previous administration including the 3rd Country Asylum Rule, Metering, and the MPP Program. We are encouraged that the administration has started processing cases of those who are currently in the MPP program. The challenge continues and there is much to be done. For example, the number of refugees showing up at the border has substantially increased this year and many are unaccompanied minors for whom appropriate shelter is inadequate.

The immigration system has been broken for many years, but the level of human misery caused by recent policies is unprecedented. The appalling conditions of the family detention centers, the immoral Family Separation Policy, and the corresponding failure to reunite many families because of inadequate record keeping is unconscionable. These practices have been condemned by many human rights organizations and must be condemned by the League as well.

LWVSNM plays a special role in advocating for humane immigration reform because we have been witness to the immense suffering refugees have endured. For this and other reasons listed above, we believe that the league must address this humanitarian crisis at the border. (For a fuller discussion of these issues, please see the LWVSNM Advocacy Statement).