

League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico
POSITION STATEMENTS
(Adopted 2021)

Affordable Housing (2012)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico 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.

Branigan Memorial Library (1986, 1996 and 2007)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico 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 Southern New Mexico supports the following measures to improve the efficiency and services offered to citizens of Doña Ana County by its county government:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Education (1998, 1999, 2012, 2015, Updated 2016)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico (LWVSNM) supports public schools as the primary method of educating students, K- 12. The League opposes the use of public education funds to support for-profit alternative options for parental choice within the public education system. 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.

While the League supports specific strategies aimed at giving all students the greatest possible academic success, the League also supports identifying and adopting effective public education policy at the most fundamental organizational level: the State Constitution, the public education department, state statute and state code. These elements impact all public schools.

In addition, the LWVSNM 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.
- 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 work- force.
- 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.
- Student testing to be used for the purpose of enabling teachers to create timely teaching strategies for the best possible student academic achievement outcomes.
- Teacher performance evaluations that demonstrate the teacher's in-depth knowledge in core academic subjects and pedagogy.
- Evaluation of teachers based on achievement of the goals in their performance evaluation plan, significant classroom observations, and some consideration of the overall student academic progress in their classroom.
- Termination of teachers and principals using a due process procedure when they no longer meet minimum standards.

Finances and Funding

- A state budget process that considers public education as the highest priority.
- A funding formula that provides for a high-quality education for all students that is consistently and fairly applied across the state.
- 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.

Election Procedures (Approved May 2019)

The LWVSNM supports:

- Protection of the right of every citizen to vote.
- Methods that increase voter participation, including automatic voter registration and same-day voter registration.
- Consolidation of all local elections.
- Collaborated efforts by government and non-partisan organizations to increase voter participation through:
 - Special Get Out the Vote campaigns.
 - The development and distribution of educational materials that explain the vote registration process as well as why voting is important.
- Systems that improve the election experience and provide ease of ballot access, including vote-by-mail, supplemented by secure ballot drop boxes and accessible voting centers, including:
 - Clarification and simplification of options for early and absentee voting procedures. Election officials should send clear notice to the public of the dates on which early voting or absentee voting begins and ends and provide publicity about the location and use of Voting Convenience Centers.
 - Cooperation and coordination among city, county, and school district officials to establish consolidated election dates and the use of common polling places, such as the Voting Convenience Centers.
 - Implementation of mail-in ballot elections locally for small elections in order to reduce costs and increase voter participation.
- Ranked choice voting for all elections.
- Implementation of Ranked Choice Voting best practices, ensuring the winning candidate attains at least 50% of the votes.
- Nominating petitions for the offices of Mayor, City Councilor and County Commissioner should contain the signatures of at least two percent of the number of qualified electors eligible to vote for that office.

Health Care in Doña 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 Southern New Mexico 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 Southern New Mexico 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 Southern New Mexico 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 the indigent are met and that the monies from the trust fund set up by the lease are expended only for health care.

Immigration (2019, amended August 2020)

League of Women Voters supports policies that:

1. promote reunification of families;
2. meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States;
3. provide due process for those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises;
4. provide for student visas;
5. ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons;
6. incorporate immigrants into our communities by providing access to education;
7. endorse the development of secure identification documents;
8. respect 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.

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

- 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 with 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 work visas;
- Incorporate immigrants into our communities by providing access to education, healthcare, 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.

Land Use Planning (1974, amended 1984, 1996, 1997, 2000, and 2001)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico 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 Southern New Mexico 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 Southern New Mexico 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 Southern New Mexico 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 that 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.

Mental Health Services in Doña Ana County (2010)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico supports:

1. An adequately funded county mental health care system that:
 - provides comprehensive services to the acutely, chronically, and seriously mentally 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 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 programs. Centers for the seriously and chronically mentally ill, apart from the county system.
3. Regulations that provide an adequate length of time for evaluation and treatment of involuntary holds.
4. Model mandatory outpatient care programs with adequate supervisory staff.

Source: League of Women Voters of California—Mental Care, Position adopted 1998.

Metropolitan Court (2007)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico 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.

Quality of Life (2015)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico supports applying a quality of life and community well-being approach when local government engages in planning, development, assessment, and policy decisions. "Quality of Life" is defined as the overall wellbeing of individuals and societies that results from maximizing human capacities and function so that life is led in a way one values.

The League supports:

- action by government agencies and community organizations that actively pursue social, economic, and environmental initiatives that improve the quality of life for community residents.
- utilizing a comprehensive quality of life approach that includes applying well-defined measures. When local officials undertake comprehensive planning efforts, they should take into account the diversity and inequalities in the community.
- actions that increase civic engagement, particularly voter participation, in the community.

Solid Waste Recycling (1999, revised 2008)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico 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.

Water (1996, amended 1997 and 2001)

The League of Women Voters of Southern New Mexico 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 use-able 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.