

Program of Work

for the

National League of Women Voters

1930-1932

Adopted in Convention
at
Louisville, Kentucky
May, 1930

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

532 SEVENTEENTH STREET N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C.



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The Program of Work

1930-1932

The National League of Women Voters is an unpartisan organization to promote the responsible participation of women in government. The League believes that a continuing political education is necessary to the success of a democratic form of government, in order that an increasing number of citizens shall base their opinions on facts and use their opportunity as voters to make those opinions effective.

Therefore the League offers the following program for study and support:

I. Efficiency in Government.

Nomination and Elections.

Problems of Administration: public finance and public employment.

Law Making.

II. Public Welfare in Government.

Child Welfare.

Education.

Living Costs.

Social Hygiene.

Women in Industry.

III. Legal Status of Women.

IV. International Co-operation to Prevent War.

The League believes that women contribute a needed point of view to government in the United States and to its international relations. Therefore the League of Women Voters urges the election and appointment of qualified women to positions in national, state, and local governments and upon commissions and other bodies having international representation.

Explanation of the Program

How the Program Is Formed

The vitality of the program of the National League of Women Voters depends upon the initiative and co-operation of the state and local Leagues. The program is framed tentatively by the national departments and national standing committees, each of which is composed of a national chairman and a member from each affiliated state League.

Not less than three months before the national convention the program as then proposed is sent to the state Leagues. Each state board is asked to submit the proposed program to its local Leagues and to report the suggestions and comments from the state to the national departments and standing committees. At the pre-convention executive meeting of each department and standing committee, a completed program is agreed upon, which is then presented to the national convention for final discussion and action.

The program as adopted consists of recommendations for study and for support to be undertaken as occasion warrants. In addition, League activities include work to insure efficiency in administration and the enforcement of law. When an item is on the list of "Recommended for Study" the League aims to present all sides of the question. However, by placing an item on the list of "Recommended for Support" the League takes a definite stand on that item and thereafter is not obligated to present points of view contrary to the position it has taken. It is understood that items on the legislative program are to be supported by continued study.

Federal Legislation

The policy of the National League on federal measures is determined by the consensus of opinion of state Leagues expressed in national convention. It is understood that state Leagues shall not take action which is contrary to the policy adopted by all the states acting in common.

The General Council gives the National Board authority to decide which measures, adopted in principle by the convention, shall be made subjects for active federal legislative work. When such measures have been chosen the officer of the National League in charge of federal legislation may call upon the state Leagues to contribute support as necessary.

State Legislation

The state Leagues of Women Voters choose from the recommendations for state legislation adopted by the national convention whatever subjects for legislation are most needed in their respective states, and decide upon the time for introducing those measures. The office of the National League may be called upon by state Leagues wishing advice and help in securing the passage of measures. National department and committee chairmen may be called upon at any time for counsel and for publications explaining their programs. In particular they will give information about methods which have proved successful in working up interest and support for legislation, efficient administration, and the enforcement of laws. Conferences with these officers may be arranged to meet urgent situations in the states.

State Leagues may find it advisable to work for laws which have not been recommended by the convention. However, measures in opposition to any portion of the program adopted by vote of the national convention should not be included in state programs.

Methods of Work

The indispensable basis for carrying out the program is organization and finance, including: organization according to political units; a budget that insures efficient service and businesslike methods; a unified plan of money-raising for the League—local, state, and national.

Informing and Discussing

- Through public meetings on special subjects.
- Through candidates' meetings.
- Through ballot-marking classes.
- Through study groups and round tables.
- Through voters' schools.
- Through institutes of government and politics.

Observing

- Through fact-finding groups.
- Through visiting legislative bodies, administrative boards, courts of law, and public institutions.
- Through comparing observed facts with standards and with procedure in other places.

Conferring

- With public officials on special problems.
- With experts on technical questions.
- With individual citizens, or with special agencies, on community undertakings.

Training

- Speakers to present facts.
- Leaders of group discussion.

Publishing

- Digests of laws, particularly of election laws.
- Pamphlets on the points of the program.
- Bulletins reporting information and progress.

Encouraging Participation

- By all qualified voters, in every step of the processes by which public officials are nominated and elected, including caucuses, primaries, conventions, elections.

Department of Efficiency in Government

The League of Women Voters understands efficient government to be a representative, responsible, and responsive government; stronger than any political or economic group; capable of rendering, with the least waste and at equitable cost, services adapted to the needs of life of all the people.

The realization of efficient government depends upon the adaptation of statutes, charters, and constitutions to the facts of life; upon the nomination, election, and appointment of responsible officials; upon the acceptance by citizens of participation in government as a public trust.

Recommended for Study

1. Nomination and election procedure:
 - a. Registration laws.
 - b. The presidential primary and national nominating conventions.
 - c. Corrupt practices legislation.
 - d. Proportional representation.
2. Legislative bodies, national, state, and local.
3. County government.
4. Federal aid.
5. Taxation.
6. Reorganization of the federal government.

Recommended for Support

Federal

1. Federal suffrage in the District of Columbia.
2. A constitutional amendment which would shorten the period between the election and the commencement of the terms of the President, the Vice-President, and the members of the Congress.
3. Opposition to proposals which would make amending the Constitution of the United States more difficult than at present.

State

1. Permanent registration.
2. The direct primary, with such modifications as will make nominations more representative.
3. A shorter ballot, preferably of the "office" type.
4. The simplification of state administration.

Local Government

1. The manager plan.

In All Branches of Government

1. A merit system in the civil service.
2. A budget system of the "executive" type.

Public Welfare in Government

The goal of public welfare in government is to secure to every citizen, at every age, the largest possible measure of life, liberty, and happiness. Necessary to this end are wiser conservation of physical resources, greater economy in the expenditure of public money, and the progressive development of governmental agencies necessary to equalize opportunity for all.

Committee on Child Welfare

Recommended for Study

1. Child labor:
 - a. Adequacy of present state laws and their enforcement.
 - b. Need for federal legislation.
2. Children in need of special protection by the state—dependents, delinquents, defectives, and children born out of wedlock.
3. Need for legislation relating to:
 - a. Illegitimacy.
 - b. Child marriages.
4. The county health unit in relation to maternity hygiene and child health.

Recommended for Support

Federal

Adequate appropriation for the Children's Bureau, Department of Labor.

Federal and State

Measures promoting the more effective establishment and continuance in the states of work for maternity and infancy hygiene.

State

1. Ratification of the Child Labor Amendment.
2. Legislation to bring state child labor laws up to a reasonable standard as to age, education, hours, and physical ability.
3. Legislation to raise the age of consent to eighteen years.

Committee on Education

The League of Women Voters bases this portion of its program on the vital interest of voters in education. It believes that upon the voters rests the responsibility of obtaining high standards of teacher training and sound systems of school administration and finance.

Recommended for Study

1. School finance—state, county, and district.
 - a. Budgets.
 - b. Ways of equalizing the burden of school support.
2. Federal aid to education in the states.
3. Compulsory school attendance.
 - a. Adjustment of the school year to local needs.
 - b. Age and school grade as criteria.
 - c. Continuation and co-operative schools.
4. How to secure qualified members of Boards of Education.
5. Statewide teacher retirement funds.
6. Text books:
 - a. Free distribution.
 - b. Agency for selection.
7. Current federal educational activities:
The National Advisory Committee on Education.
The organization of the Office of Education.

Recommended for Support

Federal

1. Federal Department of Education.
2. Adequate financing of public schools in the District of Columbia.

State

1. Adequate support of public education through:
 - a. Larger area units of taxation.
 - b. Other possible sources of support.
 - c. Scientific apportionment of state school funds.
2. Equalization of educational opportunity through:
 - a. Larger units of administration.
 - b. Consolidation of rural schools.
 - c. Compulsory education of all children between 6 and 16, nine months yearly, with English the basic language.
 - d. Trained teachers in all schools:
Training and experience required of all principals, supervisors, and superintendents of rural and city schools.
 - e. Systematic education for adults, including illiterates and foreign born, through public school extension classes with English the basic language.
 - f. Wider use of the school plant for community purposes.

Committee on Living Costs

Recommended for Study

1. The most effective utilization of the electric resources of the country from the standpoint of the public welfare.
2. Regulation of public utilities.
3. The relation between tariff legislation and living costs.
4. Elimination of unnecessary costs in producing and distributing necessities of life.

Recommended for Support

Federal

1. Development of Muscle Shoals as a national asset through legislation which provides for the continuation of government operation as required by the National Defense Act of 1916, preferably through a non-political governmental corporation to insure:
 - a. Development of the Tennessee River system as one project for hydro-electric power production, navigation, and flood control;
 - b. Experimentation in the production of cheap fertilizer under government supervision.

(This stand on Muscle Shoals is not to be interpreted as endorsement of the principle of government operation in general.)

2. Increased appropriations for the Bureau of Home Economics.
3. Opposition to efforts to abolish or undermine the Federal Trade Commission.
4. The activities of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and Justice that tend to lower living costs and prevent unfair trade practices.

State

1. A home demonstration agent for each county in the state.
2. Adequate appropriations for research work in home economics in state-supported colleges.

Committee on Social Hygiene

Women voters are concerned with provision by government for proper measures relating to social hygiene.

Recommended for Study

1. Preventive social measures and administration of justice as they relate to sex offenders:
 - a. The laws.
 - b. The police department.
 - c. The district attorney's office.
 - d. The criminal courts.
 - e. The probation office.
 - f. Corrective institutions.
2. The relation of social hygiene to the prevention of delinquency, including the work of visiting teachers, recreational directors, probation officers, and policewomen.
3. Sterilization of the unfit.

Recommended for Support

1. Vice repressive laws which provide:

That those who profit by the business of prostitution shall be punished and places used for prostitution closed.

That men and women sex offenders shall be held equally responsible.
2. The Ouster Law, providing for the removal of any official who neglects or refuses to enforce the law.
3. The permanent establishment of women's bureaus in city police departments and the appointment of properly trained and qualified policewomen in all communities, with all the necessary facilities for their work.
4. Establishment of open clinics, as well as hospital facilities, for venereally infected men and women.
5. Adequate appropriations for state and local health departments for carrying on broad venereal disease control programs.

Note.—The authorities should not be empowered to compel persons suspected of sex offenses to undergo examination for venereal disease before conviction, nor have the power to order periodical examination of women prostitutes.

Committee on Women in Industry

Recommended for Study

1. Wage problems of women in industry, especially:
Income needed by a woman to support herself independently.
Wage rates for women and methods of wage fixing.
Effects of minimum wage legislation upon women's wages.
2. Stabilizing employment:
Methods of lessening temporary, seasonal, and technological unemployment.
Enactment and administration of unemployment compensation insurance acts.
3. The decreasing of industrial hazards.

Recommended for Support

Federal

1. Adequate appropriation for the Women's Bureau, United States Department of Labor.
2. Adequate appropriation for the United States Employment Service.
3. Collection of adequate employment statistics.

State

1. Shorter hours for women in industrial occupations—not more than 8 hours in any one day with one day's rest in seven.
2. Prohibition of night work for women in industrial occupations.
3. Adequate administrative machinery and appropriations for the enforcement of labor laws.
4. Establishment and adequate appropriation for the effective functioning of a state agency of women in industry.
5. Adequate authority for the appropriate state agency to inspect industrial payrolls and publish statistics concerning earnings of women.
6. Inclusion of occupational diseases in workmen's compensation legislation.
7. Adequate administrative machinery and appropriations for public employment services.
8. Effective regulation of private employment agencies.

Standard adopted (not requiring legislation): Collective bargaining as a means of giving women workers a share in the control of the conditions of their employment.

Committee on the Legal Status of Women

The law in the past has discriminated against women, so that they have not been free to enjoy privileges which men have enjoyed nor to perform services men were free to perform. The object of this committee is to remove these discriminations and to secure for women a larger freedom and a true equality with men before the law. It will be important to examine closely every measure proposed to see whether it affects a federal or a state law and whether, in view of the actual biological, social, and occupational differences between men and women, it tends to secure for women a true equality and a greater freedom.

Recommended for Study

1. The content of laws which affect women in the exercise of public rights:
 - a. Citizenship.
 - b. Suffrage.
 - c. Office holding.
 - d. Jury service.
 - e. Admission to public employment, including promotion and the salary scale.
 - f. Participation in party management.
2. The content of laws which affect women in the exercise of private rights:
 - a. Age of majority.
 - b. Acting capacity.
 - c. Contract rights.
 - d. Property rights.
 - e. Liability and immunity in criminal procedure.
3. The content of laws affecting the rights of husband and wife and the interests of the family:
 - a. Marriage laws.
 - b. Domicile.
 - c. Property rights and claims to support:
 - (1) During the joint lives of both parties.
 - (2) After the death of one party.
 - d. Rights in regard to the children of the marriage.
 - e. Causes of divorce.
 - f. Rights and obligations in the event of termination of the marriage.
 - g. Right of each to testify in actions where the other spouse is a party.
4. The administration of laws listed above.

(Continued on the next page)

Recommended for Support

Federal

1. The removal of discriminations against women in immigration and naturalization laws.
2. Amendment of federal statutes where needed to permit the removal of discriminations against women in the territories and dependencies of the United States.

Federal, State, and Local

1. Support of specific measures still necessary to give women effective equality with men, such as
 - (1) Liability for jury service.
 - (2) Equal guardianship of children.
2. Removal of discriminations against women in administrative practice.

Note.—“Blanket” methods of legislation are disapproved.

Department of International Co-operation to Prevent War

Recommended for Study

1. The conduct of the foreign policy of the United States:
 - Duties and powers of
 - The President
 - The State Department
 - The Senate
 - The relation between the Executive and the Congress.
2. Foreign policy of the United States.
 - Problems of Latin-America.
 - The Philippines.
 - China and Japan.
 - Interpretation of neutrality, emphasizing the freedom of the seas.
3. Domestic policies affecting international relations:
 - National Defense Act.
 - Military education in schools and colleges.
 - Education for peace.
 - Cost of the Army and Navy.
4. Report of Conference on the Cause and Cure of War.
 - Causes and cures of international economic friction.
5. World co-operation:
 - League of Nations.
 - Arbitration, security, and disarmament.
 - Applications of the Peace Pact.

Recommended for Support

1. Proposals for adherence of the United States to the Permanent Court of International Justice.
 - Codification of international law.
 - Carrying out the outlawry of war.
2. Participation of the United States in conferences for the international reduction of armament and support of treaties to this end.
 - International reduction of expenditures for war, and national measures directly related to such international reduction treaties.
 - Official participation of the United States in economic and humanitarian conferences and commissions designed to promote international harmony, and support of treaties to this end.
3. The settlement of international difficulties by:
 - Arbitration or other peaceful means, and treaties having the same end in view.
 - Economic agreements in the interests of peace.

Special Committee on Immigration Problems

A Special Committee for the study of immigration problems was first authorized by the General Council in April, 1924, and has been continued since that date. Its object is the ultimate development of "a program for the admission of immigrants, and a policy of assimilation which has been carefully thought out and based upon the studies pursued."

Toward that end, the Committee presented to the convention in 1928 an outline of study which was unanimously adopted. This outline was somewhat enlarged by the action of the convention in 1930.

Recommended for Study

Immigration

1. A brief preliminary view of immigration in the United States.
2. Present immigration laws.
 - a. Selective tests.
 - b. Quota restrictions, National Origins Plan.
 - c. Deportation.
3. The question of an immigration policy regulated by a federal board.
4. Immigration measures in the Congress.
5. State laws bearing on the alien.
 - a. Disabilities of aliens.
 - b. Pensions for widows of aliens.
 - c. State aid for adult education.
6. Present tide of immigration; the foreign born in the community.
 - a. Education of adult aliens.

Naturalization

7. Present naturalization laws.
8. Naturalization proposals in the Congress.

Note.—The Special Committee on Immigration Problems states its accord with the Committee on the Legal Status of Women, which recommends for support:

Federal

1. The removal of discriminations against women in immigration and naturalization laws.

It also states its accord with the Committee on Education, which recommends for support:

State

2. e. Systematic education for adults, including illiterates and foreign born, through public school extension classes with English the basic language.

