



LOCAL PROGRAM CONSENSUS STATEMENTS 2017-2018

I. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

A. GAS DRILLING - January 2007, May 2013

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports the regulation of gas drilling in the Tarrant County League area to mitigate environmental, health, and safety risks. Regulations should include, but not be limited to:

- restrictions on transporting gas, locating and monitoring gas pipelines
- setbacks from the perimeter of drilling site to surface owner’s property line
- insurance of traffic safety to and from the drilling site
- required payment from users to restore roads damaged during gas drilling and production
- limited operations of the fracturing process to daylight hours
- required sound and light barriers
- reduced air pollution, reduced water usage, and regulated water disposal
- encouragement of on-site water treatment
- required drill site development that facilitates clean-up
- required landscaping, tree replacement and other clean-up;
- required funds from driller and public entity for the above.

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County encourages actions to:

- protect surface landowners’ rights
- preserve property values
- provide fair compensation for “taking”; and
- promote equitable payment for mineral rights and leases.

B. TREES - February 2005, LANDSCAPE - March 2006

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports the creation of tree and landscape ordinances in all Tarrant County communities to preserve the livability of the community through preservation of trees and green space. The ordinances should:

- be clear, enforceable and have measurable, objective procedures to avoid misinterpretation and possible loopholes and to allow flexibility to enhance the long-term survivability of the maximum number of trees and preservation of green space, while minimizing additional developer costs;
- include definitions of terms and cover new tree plantings; protection and/or replacement of individual trees according to land use;

- include acceptable incentives such as variances on building standards or on additional landscape requirements, and disincentives to prevent failure to comply with ordinances such as withholding building permits, punitive fines and withholding certificates of occupancy. Noncompliance would include, but not be limited to; removal of protected trees, disturbance or damage to tree root systems by construction activities including storage of materials or construction debris over root systems, or by installation of underground lines for utilities, watering systems, etc..
- cover new commercial, industrial and governmental development and rights-of-way, and should include; green space, landscaping parking lots to minimize heat reflection, measures to minimize erosion and storm water run-off, water conservation measures, and buffers with residential areas.
- cover new multi-family or sub-division residential developments, and should include green space, planting to save energy costs and conserve water run-off, leaving a percentage of desirable existing trees, encouraging use of native plants, and encouraging use of permeable surfaces such as rock areas, gravel and permeable paving.
- provide for frequent, efficient, and well-defined inspection and monitoring for compliance and enforcement of ordinances, including adequate funding, by a professional forester or equivalent when feasible.
- provide a mechanism for timely, informed citizen input.
- contain measures to preserve the character of existing neighborhoods including; requiring permits for removal of large caliper trees, requirements for sprinkler systems including rain sensors, prohibiting practices that cause erosion, and measures to preserve the canopy cover.

The Tarrant County League of Women voters supports additional funding to implement tree and landscape ordinances and for tree planting on public property, but not on private property. We also would support other initiatives to preserve trees and green space on a case by case basis.

C. PARKLAND - January 2004, May 2013

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports action to fulfill the recreational needs of the community through acquisition and development of sufficient accessible and free parkland to meet or exceed the national minimum standards (21 acres per 1,000 population).

- The uses of acquired land should include, but not be limited to linear parks, playing fields, natural areas, and walking and bike trails to provide alternative modes of travel as well as recreational opportunities.

Parks and Recreation Departments should:

- encourage widespread citizen participation and publicize volunteer opportunities through the use of recreational center advisory councils, youth councils, neighborhood park committees, and public hearings announced in the newspaper.
- work directly with the departments, agencies or developers whose actions impact park erosion.
- employ experts in park planning, horticulture, and urban forestry as well as consultants as needed.
- expand conservation programs such as saving water through planting of native plants and composting classes for the public.
- employ experts in park planning, horticulture, and urban forestry as well as consultants as needed.
- consider the relationship between park usage and neighboring properties in acquisition, planning and design of future parks.
- maintain all parks and recreation equipment and facilities in a safe and usable condition.
- form liaison groups among county public entities, such as cities and schools, to insure maximum cooperation in the use and development of recreational space, facilities and programs.
- provide environmental education such as interpretive trails, the Wildscape, the Fort Worth Nature Center, the long range Trinity Trails plan, and other education efforts.
- appoint representatives from all parts of the community to Parks and Recreation boards.
- fund acquisition and maintenance by as many sources as possible including, but not limited to, city, county, state, federal private donations, user fees, private developers, grants, and public/private cooperatives such as the Nature Conservancy.
- evaluate the process by which organizations raise money through ticket sales, parking fees, and/or concession stands to determine if the Departments should receive a percentage of the money raised.
- set standardized guidelines for revenue sharing.
- cooperate with Police Departments on safety and noise control. The forms of curfew should reflect the type of park in question.
- Cities, schools and community organizations should work together in the development of new programs and the expansion of current programs to meet the special needs of families, children, senior citizens, the disabled, and other special needs persons.
- The League opposes the sale of parkland except under very special circumstances.

D. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION - May 1987

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports a government subsidized transportation system.

II. ETHICS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT -- May 1990

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports the enactment of an ethics code by each local governmental entity. This code should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Financial disclosure of income sources and business interests.
- Proscription of conflicts of interests such as nepotism, inside information, government contracts, and use of position.
- Restrictions on lobbying prohibiting all gifts, and requiring disclosure of all campaign contributions.

STUDY OF LOCAL ELECTION PROCEDURES;

Focus: Accessibility, positive and negative campaigning. May 1998 - **(Dropped May 2001)**

[III. CITY GOVERNMENT - Dropped May 2005]

III. TARRANT COUNTY ISSUES

A. COUNTY GOVERNMENT - May 1972

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports measures to strengthen Tarrant County government through changes in structure and function, centralized administration, and consolidation and/or coordination of services.

- The Commissioners Court should take steps to serve the people more effectively by;
 - establishing priorities and centralizing planning, administration, and budgeting for Tarrant County;
 - coordinating and consolidating services where feasible;
 - avoiding the lowering of existing standards in any situation.
- The League supports coordination and/or consolidation in:
 - law enforcement; fire protection; solid waste management; parks and recreation; and other areas as the need and opportunity may arise.

B. COUNTY-WIDE AMBULANCE SERVICE - April 1984

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports a County-wide ambulance system which would include at least the following salient features:

- emergency ambulance service to be operated by the private sector and a periodic competitive bid process to be used to select the private operator, in order to ensure a full and fair opportunity to compete for any contract by all qualified bidders.
- a central dispatch system with an advanced communication system.
- all ambulances owned by the public sector but operated by the private operator.

- each city to determine whether or not it will subsidize the price of ambulance services to its citizens and to what extent.
- a uniform ambulance ordinance for all participating jurisdictions in order to provide uniform regulation throughout the system.
- medical oversight provided by a board or entity directed by full-time practicing emergency physicians which will result in a system of uniform protocols to be applicable throughout the entire system.
- the Tarrant County Hospital District to assume responsibility for payment of all emergency medical services for indigents in conformity with State constitutional requirements.
- a senior citizen subscription program which should fix the price of the uninsured portions of ambulance bills and allow unlimited use of medically necessary emergency and/or non-emergency ambulance service.
- the establishment of a regulated system of Fire Department and volunteer-based first responders.
- start-up costs obtained from a bank loan or bond issue.
- emergency and transfer service may be supplied by the same contractor, using separate equipment, but other companies may offer transfer service.
- a first responder system when no fire department is available to provide the service.
- volunteer groups; Sheriff's department; Police department; or Aid stations may be used for temporary service, such as at the lakes on summer weekends.

C. THREE-DIGIT NON-EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS - December 2000

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports three-digit non-emergency telephone systems in Tarrant County in order to significantly increase people's access to needed services; specifically, the designation of "311" for information regarding a municipality's services (such as animal control, garbage collection, or non-emergency police or administrative services), and the use of "211" for information on health and human services.

D. VOTING PROCEDURES - May 1987, September 2001, May 2004

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports the continued use of optically scanned ballots and/or an electronic ballot system as long as the system includes rigorous security measures to insure that the machines and any associated software are not compromised; and includes an individual audit capacity for the purposes of recounts and authentication of elections.

- Individual election precinct electronic counters are essential to guard against fraud.

- Continued monitoring and voter education are necessary for the successful implementation of the system.
- Voter privacy needs must be insured by continued use of voting booths.
- electronic voting devices are especially recommended for early voting.

E. LIBRARY SERVICES - -1987, reworded May 1988

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports access to library service for all residents of the county.

- financial contributions should be made by Tarrant County to city libraries sufficient that all libraries could again be open for use by all county residents without payment of non-resident fees.
- the County's contribution could be based on either population or circulation.
- the League opposes establishment of a special county library taxing district.
- until adequate County financial support to city libraries is provided, the League supports the contracting of library services by those municipalities which need them.
- the County should contract with cities to provide library and/or bookmobile service to residents of unincorporated areas.

IV. SOCIAL POLICY

A. HEALTH CARE - 1990-91, 1996-7, May 1999, May 2001, April 2006, July 2007, May 2013

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports the continuation, improvement and expansion of health services for the medically indigent in Tarrant County, including undocumented immigrants, in order to overcome barriers to accessibility.

Identified barriers include:

- transportation
- culture and language differences
- lack of easily understood knowledge and information
- fear of immigration consequences
- inflexible hours
- decentralized eligibility assessment and services
- lack of health insurance
- lack of U.S. citizenship
- high cost of emergency care

Services should include, but not be limited to:

- well-person and preventive care to reduce need for high cost emergency care
- education on health issues
- mental health care
- prescription drugs
- dental, optical and hearing screening and treatment

- immunizations
- volunteer services in nursing homes
- reproductive health services

Access for preventive and emergency health care for undocumented immigrants in public hospitals and clinics, such as JPS facilities and school-based clinics, should be based on:

- low-income or indigent economic status
- cost of and availability of transportation
- access to coverage by employer/employee health insurance programs
- residency in Tarrant County, not US citizenship
- higher morbidity and mortality rates, including infants

Local health care, both preventive and emergency, should be provided through Medicaid, John Peter Smith Health Network, Planned Parenthood, CHIP, City and County Health Services, and Federally Qualified Health Centers. Sources of funding should include local, state, and federal dollars.

County property taxes designated for JPS Health Network should be used to provide expanded preventive and emergency health care for all Tarrant County residents. A larger percentage of the current surplus of the JPS budget should be spent in providing preventive health care for needy Tarrant County inhabitants including undocumented immigrants, by expanding the number of school-based clinics and the number of beds in JPS hospitals.

B. HOUSING - Human Needs Consensus -- May 1989

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports access of people with low income to housing in our League area.

A variety of housing units should be available to low income individuals and families including, but not limited to:

- single rooms, boarding houses, apartments in various settings, and single family homes.
- transitional housing for the mentally ill, elderly, homeless, battered women and the handicapped while residents work towards more permanent housing. Supervision may be necessary for transitional groups in whatever setting they may be living.

Funding should come from all levels of government - local, state and federal - and from the private sector.

- low income housing residents should pay on a sliding scale based on their income.
- social service agencies and private organizations should be encouraged to bridge the gap between the need for and the availability of housing and support services.
- existing agencies should receive additional funds to increase their staff to include case managers.

A housing clearing house should be created in Tarrant

County to include an information and referral system, landlord and tenants counseling program, advocacy for residents, and outreach and promotion for community networking.

Emphasis should be placed on cooperation among all of those involved in low income housing: agencies, landlords, managers and the tenants themselves.

C. SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH – May 1970, December 1994, March 2005

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports continued, expanded and improved services for children and youth that address various identified problems.

We support improved Tarrant County facilities for the care of juveniles in trouble including the development of a comprehensive program, an adequate detention facility and immediate improvement in the quality of services and staff provided for dealing with these juveniles. Steps to improve service include, but are not limited to:

- a State Child Welfare Unit for Tarrant County with improved services for dependent and neglected children.
- increased funding for commercial and subsidized day care facilities in Tarrant County.
- current information on services provided by the County to dependent and neglected and delinquent children.

Additionally, the League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports the continuation, improvement, and expansion of services to children and youth in Tarrant County that address the following problems: latch-key children, runaways and throwaway children, homeless children, abused children, sexually active youth, children affected by substance abuse, and children affected by AIDS.

Specifically, the League supports the initiation of or the continuation, improvement and expansion of services to children and youth in Tarrant County which include, but are not limited to the following:

- parenting classes
- mentoring for parents
- youth-to youth hot-line
- all-day school
- year-round school
- before and after-school programs
- school clinics for substance abusers
- better availability of birth-control services
- residential facility for pregnant teens
- residential facility for parenting teens
- residential facility for runaways and throwaways
- family support services
- more commercial and subsidized day care facilities
- a county-wide full continuum of care for substance abusers including residential facilities for girls and boys and school-based programs

To pay for services to children and youth in Tarrant County, the League supports funding from all levels of government. The League also supports the expansion of volunteer efforts. In particular, the League supports adequate funding for treatment of low-income and medically indigent substance abusers.

D. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - May 1978

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports aggressive planning and working with other concerned groups to coordinate mental health services.

- action should be on the county level and the County should participate in funding.
- efforts should be made to support one of the recent efforts at coordination (e.g. Triad, Coordinating Council for Mental Health Services to Children, the proposals of the Marek report for a Children's Commission) rather than develop another pattern.
- prevention and education is the most important part of the treatment continuum, particularly for children up to 14 years of age.
- the need for outpatient care is more evident as children grow older and need for all kinds of facilities--especially outpatient, emergency and 24-hour care--is more obvious for the 14-17 year old, for whom essentially no facilities exist.

E. WOMEN'S SERVICES - May 1985, May 1997

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports community-based services to women that encourage independence and self-sufficiency, and that promote long-term solutions to poverty and social problems. We support efforts to provide funding for these services from private and public sources.

- there is a need for ancillary services, such as child care and transportation, and more services for female substance abusers and older women.
- an umbrella, countywide organization for women should be formed to coordinate services and funding, and eliminate duplication.
- funding should include a mix of federal, state, local city and school, and private sources.

F. LEGAL SERVICES – May 1971, amended May 1988

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports a federally/locally funded legal services program to provide legal representation to the indigent at all stages of the legal process.

[In May 1988 support for a public defender system was dropped because the courts are no longer using the public defender system.]

V. EDUCATION

A. HEALTH CURRICULUM -- 1979 and January 1990, November 1989, updated and expanded 1996, revised 2011.

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports a coordinated and integrated family life curriculum to be taught in public schools in Tarrant County, in grades Kindergarten through twelve.

- the curriculum should be specific and explicit in providing information on all methods of preventing unwanted pregnancies and should include skills and knowledge which would prepare students to make appropriate decisions on issues such as substance abuse and sexuality.
- the skills and knowledge taught should include decision-making, self-esteem, parenting responsibilities, responsible behavior, respect for others, communication, resistance to peer pressure, and stress management. Sequential instruction should be provided at each grade level covering topics appropriate to age and development of the student.
- qualified teachers should teach this curriculum and they should have initial specialized training and annual in-service sessions, and periodic training workshops.
- specialized staff assigned to several schools would be an acceptable alternative to in-house trained teachers.
- all teachers should have some training in handling sensitive subjects.

B. QUALITY EDUCATION -- 1978-79, revised May 1981, 1988 and 2011.

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports a quality public education system which develops the greatest potential in each individual and increased funding for county-wide school district libraries.

- the process of education should strive to maintain the individuality and originality of the learner.
- graduating students should be prepared to enter the job market or pursue higher education.
- schools should teach the basic skills and knowledge necessary to seek information, to present ideas, and to use judgment and imagination in resolving problems using the latest technology.
- schools should provide an enriched and individualized education including music, art, physical education, vocational education and gifted and talented programs.
- schools should provide a definite process for selecting-teachers to teach special programs, and workshops should be offered to enhance training.
- schools must comply with mandated curricula and testing.

- schools should provide remedial help in the basic skills when needed and should provide for special needs students, and students should be allowed to take special courses when deemed in their best interest.
- schools should provide counselors for academic, career and personal counseling of students.
- the discipline policy must be strong, fair, and considerate of circumstance without the infliction of corporal punishment in the public schools.
- suspension of students should be limited to cases involving violence against person or property and in cases where acts are dangerous and pose a threat of imminent harm.
- schools should offer alternative policies such as school counseling, psychiatric diagnosis, physical check-ups, conferences with child and parent, and placement in alternative classes or schools.
- suspension must include due process as required by law.
- the district should provide both pre-teaching and in-service training programs for the handling of children with discipline problems.
- schools should engage the support and involvement of parents and the community in public schools.
- in order to preserve neighborhoods and to meet the needs of the school community, any proposed changes in the educational structure must be coordinated between local government, citizen advisory committees, and the schools.
- the district should provide early public access and review of the budget with emphasis on smaller class size, an increase in teachers' salaries, and expansion of the counseling program.
- all schools should support programs which implement Title IX.
- all schools should increase funding for materials and technology
- clerks or aides should be used to staff the library when no librarian is present and electronic checkout equipment should be installed to cut down on vandalism and pilferage.
- school libraries should be open for student use before and after school and during lunch period, as well as during class time.

C. TEEN PREGNANCY - November 1989, updated and expanded 1996, 2011.

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports measures like FWISDs New Lives, which allow pregnant students to continue their education, and child care programs, in order to retain parenting teens in the public school until graduation.

- components of the Program should include medical care, counseling, parenting skills education, and nursery care.
- community involvement in preventing teen pregnancy should be encouraged and supported.
- funding for programs should be sought from federal and state funds, private sources such as United Way agencies, and through user fees.

D. HIGH SCHOOL START TIMES – May 2015

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County supports the adoption of high school bell schedules that align the start of the school day with adolescent sleep patterns. Later school start times support the health, safety and academic achievement of high school students.

- Research has shown that adolescent sleep and wake patterns shift later while still requiring approximately 9 hours of sleep each night and that by shifting high school start times later measurable and significant increases in the health, safety and academic achievement of students occurs.
- The American Academy of Pediatricians recommends high schools start at 8:30 or later.
- Communities with high school start times in the 7 o'clock hour should embrace and implement bell schedules to allow for a later high school start by working with and educating school districts, parents, students and community representatives.