

ENVIRONMENT

LWVVT CONSENSUS POSITION ON RENEWABLE ENERGY

The League of Women Voters of Vermont (LWVVT) adopts the following positions on renewable energy sources and energy conservation measures for the State of Vermont. This position provides state specific guidance for applying the Energy Position of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

The LWVVT should take an active role supporting:

- solar, wind, biomass and wood, and hydroelectric sources of energy taking into consideration the specific advantages and disadvantages of each source;
- utility policies and programs that encourage energy efficiency; and
- utility and state, regional, and local government policies and programs to reduce greenhouse gases.

The LWVVT supports programs by the State of Vermont to promote renewable energy resources and energy efficiency.

Therefore, the LWVVT supports state legislation which moves Vermont to predominant reliance on renewable resources, as supported by the LWVUS position.

In evaluating proposed renewable energy proposals, whether public or private, the LWVVT should:

- weigh the abundance of the resources available to support the proposed energy source;
- take into consideration the other resources required for the project; and
- weigh the probable level of success compared to existing technologies.

The LWVVT supports passage of a renewable portfolio standard for the State of Vermont.

The LWVVT supports the concept of green pricing as one tool to promote renewable energy development but does not see it as a substitute for a strong renewable portfolio standard. Everyone should pay for renewable energy. Thus, green pricing should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Public accountability for green pricing must be provided by the Public Service Board and utility auditors.

When evaluating specific renewable energy projects, the LWVVT should consider:

- Environmental impacts, including green house gas reduction
- Public health and safety
- Economic benefits, including job creation
- Efficiency
- Size of environmental, economic, and energy efficiency benefits

The LWVVT encourages the use of individually owned and operated manure based methane gas generators, wood-chip furnaces, solar heating and electricity generation, and

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wind generators by Vermont families, farms, and institutions provided they meet all environmental impact criteria.

The LWVVT encourages municipalities that tax equipment to exempt renewable energy systems from these taxes

Hydropower

The LWV supports the State of Vermont entering into power purchase agreements for out of state hydropower that are advantageous to Vermont rate payers. For example, the League would support investment in the Connecticut River dams if such investment were shown to be economically advantageous to Vermont ratepayers.

Biomass

The LWVVT strongly supports increased use of biomass as a source of energy. For example:

- New construction and conversion of wood chip biomass electric generating stations, like McNeil in Burlington.
- Power generation with methane from landfill gases and manure
- Diversion of waste wood from municipal landfills to adjacent biomass generating stations provided air quality and transportation issues are addressed.

Solar

The LWV supports the expansion of incentive programs to promote the installation of solar power plants at public facilities, such as schools, town halls, and other public buildings provided they are cost effective.

Wind

The LWV supports opening state and federal lands to commercial and public wind power projects with the exception of wilderness areas. Wind power projects should receive full environmental review. Ridgelines should be evaluated for wind power projects using a consistent state standard.

Cogeneration and conservation

The LWV supports public and private initiatives to promote cogeneration and district heating provided they are cost effective.

The LWV should work to increase public awareness of energy efficiency and available technical assistance.

2005

CONCURRENCE STATEMENT ON DISPOSAL OF LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE

The Leagues of Women Voters of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont adopt the following position on Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal:

COMPACT STATUS

The Leagues of Women Voters of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont believe there are a number of acceptable solutions for the three states to meet their responsibility under the Federal Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act of 1980 with regard to disposal of low-level waste generated within the region. The Leagues support:

1. A regional compact which meets League criteria.
2. Development of a single in-state site for disposal of waste produced in each state, providing the legal questions of federal preemption and application of interstate commerce laws are resolved, if no satisfactory regional compact can be developed.

DISPOSAL METHODS

The Leagues support disposition of nuclear wastes in an environmentally sound manner. The host state must be responsible for monitoring and ensuring isolation of the waste for the duration of its radioactive life. Because the region has complex geologic, climatic, hydro geologic, and seismic conditions, the Leagues support storage and disposal methods which provide for monitoring, separation and retrievability in engineered facilities using best available technology.

SITE SELECTIONThe Leagues want hazardous and radioactive waste treatment, storage and disposal facilities sited under conditions which pose the least amount of risk to the public and to sensitive environmental areas and natural resources. They must be located away from natural hazard areas, drinking water supplies, fragile land areas, valuable ecosystems, significant renewable resources, wildlife, historic and agricultural areas. Secondary land use impacts, such as buffer areas, adequate roads and transportation safety, must also be considered.

MANAGEMENT

The Leagues endorse host state control during all stages of managing low-level radioactive waste. The host state should oversee: site selection, active operations, the decommissioning, closure, and institutional control of the site. This must include long-term monitoring and maintenance to ensure that wastes remain isolated until they are

environmentally safe. The host state needs enforcement capability and the ability to sue violators for damages.

ECONOMICS

A complete evaluation of the economic, social, and environmental impacts must be carried out in such a way that decision makers and the public have adequate information on which to base a decision. The full costs of planning, selecting, building, administering, operating, monitoring, providing liability coverage and institutional control after closure must be adequately projected and borne by the generators of waste. Provision should be made for periodic review of the economics of the operation.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The League of Women Voters strongly believes that public understanding is crucial to the success of important decisions on low-level waste disposal. The League proposes clear provisions for public participation and strict application of the Right-to-Know Law. Citizen participation throughout the decision making process must be assured at every governmental level.

Statement Developed July 5, 1984 by: Carol Fritz (LWVME), Aileen Katz (LWVNH) and Sonja Schuyler (LWVVT)

LWV – VT CONSENSUS POSITION ON SOLID WASTE

The League of Women Voters of Vermont endorses the policy and purpose of the Act Relating to Solid Waste adopted in 1987 by the Vermont General Assembly. Specifically, the League supports:

1. State technical and financial leadership for a program of waste reduction and management.
2. A waste management program which is sustainable, environmentally sound, and economically beneficial over the long term.
3. A waste management program which gives priority to reducing the waste stream through recycling and through the reduction of non-biodegradable and hazardous ingredients.
4. A program which requires that all generators of waste pay the real costs to society of waste management and disposal.

The LWVVT advocates a major educational campaign which we feel is essential for the implementation of such programs. The objective of the campaign must be to assure that everyone understands the problems, dangers and costs of our out-of-control proliferation of waste; to guarantee that everyone is aware of what measures and schemes are available

to effectively deal with the crisis; and to encourage in the strongest way possible that everyone voluntarily and willingly participates in and complies with these schemes.

The League supports the following specific measures:

1. Ban hazardous products and packaging for which alternatives are available, beginning with:
 - a) Products with chlorinated organic compounds such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
 - b) Household cleaners containing synthetic organic solvents, since these are toxic.
2. Ban non-recyclable products for which recyclable alternatives are available, especially multi-material packaging (aseptic juice cartons.)
3. Labels giving a “seal of quality” for reusable, recyclable and/or biodegradable products or packages; adversely, warning labels on those that are not.
4. Standardization of containers by type (soda, beer, shampoo, catsup, etc.) with the objective of eventually having them be returnable to manufacturers to be sterilized and directly reused (rather than reprocessed for recycling.)
5. Expansion of existing deposit return program to cover:
 - a) Beverage containers not now included in Vermont’s “bottle bill,” i.e. wine, fruit juices, wine coolers, milk jugs, etc.
 - b) Tires, which present special problems for disposal.
 - c) Dry cell batteries, which now introduce into landfills heavy metals which could be recovered if the batteries were separated from the general waste stream.
6. Vermont participation in industrial waste exchanges such as the Northeast Industrial Waste Exchange, which puts generators and users of waste/resource materials in contact with one another by means of catalogs, a call-in search service, and an on-line computer database.
7. Municipal or waste district control of carters to discourage inefficient service and to facilitate collection of recyclable and reusable materials.
8. Mandatory source separation of hazardous wastes and of recyclable, reusable and biodegradable (compostable) materials.
9. Recycling programs for waste generated in state and municipal offices and plants to set good examples and to serve as pilot projects with which to solve problems inherent in such programs.
10. State fostering of markets for recycled materials by:

- a) Government purchase of goods made from recycled materials
Financial incentives for manufacturers using recycled goods
- b) Favorable publicity for commercial firms which use recycled materials.

Regarding waste treatment and processing and disposal, the League affirms the national League position which states (in summary) that “The League supports policies to...ensure safe treatment, storage, and disposal of all wastes in order to protect air, water, and land resources.” We advocate having municipal or waste district programs to separate and shred yard wastes, especially autumn leaves and tree trimmings, for reuse as mulch or for composting. The complexity of more comprehensive composting endeavors, incinerators, and landfills requires technical knowledge beyond the scope of this study; no specific advocacy, therefore, is recommended beyond the national position guideline above.

1987

LWV – VT CONSENSUS POSITION ON LAND USE

The League of Women voters of Vermont believes that land use goals can best be achieved in a state organizational framework to carry out land protection and to provide an integrated overall development plan for Vermont. We believe it is the basic responsibility of local governments to ensure the wise use of land within their borders. We advocate implementation of a state land use plan which coordinates the plans and policies of local and regional agencies and is tailored to enhance maximum local decision making. Local governments should be required to exercise a minimum level of planning and regulation over land use. The state should have the authority to regulate areas where local governments fail to regulate land use of local concern.

Recognizing that some land use decisions are of statewide concern, we concur that the state has an overriding interest and responsibility to provide planning and direct regulation of the following critical areas:

1. Fragile or historic lands where development could result in irreversible damage.
2. Renewable resource lands where development could result in the loss of productivity.
3. Natural hazard lands where development could endanger life and property.

We believe that the following critical land use activities are also of more than local concern:

1. Areas impacted by public investment where siting results in secondary land use demands.
2. Large scale private development which may have substantial impact upon the

physical, social and economic environment.

3. Land development of more than local benefit not provided by the private sector.

It is our recommendation that decisions for these activities be made at the local and regional levels according to state established standards and subject to state review. Impact statements should be required on all major public and private developments.

There was a strong mandate from League members for greater emphasis on regional planning and regulation in these areas of more than local concern. Such a regional level of government would also have advisory powers with a responsibility to review and comment on local plans and to provide services. Members of this regional body should be appointed, not elected, with representation from local government and citizens with a field of expertise.

We believe that the state should provide increased technical assistance and data information to help localities develop and exercise local land use management functions. Localities should be authorized and encouraged to exercise innovative land use planning and regulatory techniques. Provisions must also be made to establish an appeals board with powers to arbitrate conflicts between governmental bodies and between citizens and government in land use decisions.