

VOTER

League of Women
Voters of Indiana
County, Pennsylvania



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

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Consensus Meeting to be Held November 12

A consensus meeting to determine the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education will be held on November 12. (See the Calendar of Upcoming Events on page 4 for additional details). In order to prepare you to participate in this meeting, this issue of the Voter is dedicated to providing background information on this study.

The scope of the LWVUS education study includes the history of the federal government's role in public education, the government's use of common core standards and assessments, and funding and equity issues addressed in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The culminating LWVUS position will address only those issues delineated in the scope. Thus, **at our local League meeting, we will focus directly on the 15 consensus questions printed on the following pages.**

Please give some thought to the questions, and come to our meeting for clarification of the issues—as well as a lively discussion!

Background papers on the Role of the Federal Government In Education can be found at
http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Public_Education&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=167&ContentID=16957.

(Brief summaries have appeared in previous issues of the Voter.)

League in the Community in October

LWVIC was out and about in Indiana in October providing voter services and education: On October 13, LWVIC provided a moderator for the Human Services Council's annual Candidates Luncheon. Candidates for Court of Common Pleas Judge, County Prothonotary, and County District Attorney fielded questions from the audience. On October 25, Candidates Night for Judge and District Attorney took place, sponsored by LWVIC and Renda Broadcasting. It was standing room only, with well over 100 in attendance, including a couple dozen high school students thanks to the Indiana schools' civics teachers.

The Day of Play, of which LWVIC is a sponsor, attracted more than 1200 parents, grandparents, and children on October 22. A big thank you to Pepita Jimenez-Jacobs who single-handedly manned the League's table and handed out voting materials and registration forms.

League members make all of these events successful. If you know anyone who would make a good League member, please contact one of the board members. We'll send out information. Even individuals who don't have time to be directly involved right now can benefit from the great information that members receive from the state, national and local Leagues. The more members, the stronger the message. Find more information at www.lwv.org and palwv.org/Indiana.

Consensus Questions

General Questions

1. The current role of the federal government in public education is
Much too small Too small About right Too large Much too large
2. What should be the role of the federal government in public education? (Rank)
 - A. To ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education
 - B. To develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress
 - C. To mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12
 - D. To monitor state efforts for funding
 - E. To measure teacher effectiveness through test data
3. A quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.
Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree

Common Core Standards

4. Currently the governors and state education officers have developed Common Core Standards that are national but not federal. Should the standards be mandated of the states in order to obtain federal funding? (Choose one)
 - A. Special grant programs such as Race to the Top
 - B. All programs under Elementary and Secondary Education Act where the needs qualify for funding
 - C. All programs receiving federal funding from any source
 - D. All of the above
 - E. None of the above
 5. Should there be a national assessment aligned with the common cores standards? Yes No

If Yes, Should implementation be voluntary or federally mandated? (Choose one)
 - A. Voluntary B. Mandated C. Mandated, if fully funded
If No, what other accountability measures might you suggest? (Choose one)
 - A. Continue to allow the states to develop their own assessments
 - B. Suggest that the local education districts use their own assessments or adopt one that is a nationally norm-referenced assessment such as the *Stanford Achievement Test* or *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*
 - C. Suggest that districts use a portfolio type of assessment where student projects and active ties would be scored holistically
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Consensus Questions (continued from page 2)

6. National standards should lead to: (Choose one)
- A. A nationally mandated curriculum to be aligned to the national standards and assessments
 - B. A national curriculum that is only suggested but not mandated
 - C. A suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum
 - D. No national curriculum
7. What role should the national assessment consortia play in student evaluation? (Rank order)
- A. Provide an assessment system that is aligned to the Common Core Standards
 - B. Provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards
 - C. Provide criteria for determining readiness for college and careers
 - D. Provide information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement
 - E. Provide diagnostic information on each child.
8. Data from the national assessments are often difficult for parents, teachers and others to understand. If we have a national assessment, what information is most important to be reported to parents, teachers, students and the community? (Choose one)
- A. Data should be “norm referenced” (where students are ranked) for district comparison only
 - B. Data should be “criterion referenced” and clearly informative so that teachers, parents, and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level
 - C. Data should be used to determine “cut” scores knowing if students have mastered requirements for special grade levels
9. Information from nationally required assessment data should be used to (Choose one):
- A. Sanction schools not measuring up to the specific levels
 - B. Reward schools that achieve high scores
 - C. Rank teachers based on student test score data
 - D. Reward teachers who have exemplary scores
 - E. Inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs.

(Consensus Questions continued on page 5)

A newsletter of the
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CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, November 8, 2011—Election Day

Saturday, November 12, 2011, 8:30 (breakfast, individual purchase), 8:45 (Program)—Consensus Meeting: The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education, Fire Mountain Restaurant

Monday, November 14, 2011, 7:00 pm—Board Meeting, All Members Welcome, Sandy Whitson's home (402 Elm Street, Indiana)

Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let President Sherene Hess know at 724-762-4162, and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWWIC's activities.

Our Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Consensus Questions (continued from page 3)

Funding and Equity

10. In the past most of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding has been non-competitive based on need. All/Any Schools that prove they fall under the federal guidelines for funding receive those funds. However, competitive grants are now being proposed to states/districts who meet certain federal requirements, such as Race to the Top. Which would be appropriate:
- A. Non-competitive funding for all applicants meeting requirements
 - B. A combination of non-competitive and competitive grants
 - C. Competitive grants only
 - D. No federal funding
11. If the federal government's role is the concern of the "common good" then: (Choose one)
- A. Mandates only should be sanctioned
 - B. Mandates and funding should both be provided
 - C. Funding should be provided through grants only
 - D. A combination of funded mandates and grants should apply
 - E. No mandates should be required and limited grants for innovation available
12. Equity in public education means equitable access to: (Rank order)
- A. High quality teaching/learning
 - B. Adequate and current learning materials
 - C. Lean and well maintained physical facilities
 - D. Food and health care
 - E. Safe and secure neighborhoods
 - F. Secure housing
13. Currently Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding is considered "categorical" rather than for general use. This means that it can only be used with special populations for special purposes. ESEA should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs.
Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree
14. The federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5, for all children?
Strongly agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly disagree
15. Federal support for early childhood education programs (e.g. Head Start, Title I, Special Education, Early Start) should include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed.
- A. Strongly Agree Agree No consensus Disagree Strongly Disagree
 - B. This funding should be extended to:
 - All children Only those with special needs Special needs first

Food for Thought...

Arguments for Common Educational Standards

- To ensure that all children, no matter where they live in the U.S., are prepared and successful in postsecondary education
- To ensure a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices both within and across states
- To help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success
- To provide a benchmark as a first step to ensuring students will be prepared for success in college and work

Arguments against Common Educational Standards

- Cost and difficulty of changing the existing curriculum and assessments
- Sovereignty of states in issues related to education
- States may be prevented from developing their own far more rigorous standards
- Standards are more oriented toward college than toward immediate entry into the workforce after high school

Arguments for Competitive Funding

- Leads to innovation, efficiency, and accountability
- Requires school districts to analyze current organizational models and enhance transparency in use of funds
- Provides a direct link between accountability for the use of funds and student achievement
- Gives the Secretary of Education clear authority to guide and redirect, as necessary, the Department of Education's approach to state and local funding

Arguments against Competitive Funding

- There are winners and losers in any competition
- Grant writing requires the use of state and local education funds, that may adversely impact small and rural areas
- If education is a moral obligation and a social justice, adequate funding should be provided
- Incomplete data to support competitive funding and its impact upon schools, districts or state education agencies
- Competitive funding opportunities may be inconsistent and driven by a particular agenda

Arguments for Federal Mandates

- Provide guidance and accountability to ensure equity
- Reflect a commitment from the federal government
- Encourage needed innovation, reform, and school improvement
- Ensure national, state and local consistency
- Call for a greater federal investment in research based programs to help states and districts respond to the needs of schools

Arguments against Federal Mandates

- Mandates restrict flexibility of state education agencies and school districts
- Mandates' accountability measures may be viewed as unrealistic and therefore not implemented
- Mandates' sanctions may adversely impact schools that need the most assistance because the federal financial assistance is not enough to support the mandate.

