

VOTER



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CONSENSUS

Study—>Discussion—>Member agreement —>Policy position

Consensus is the method that the League of Women Voters (on all of its levels—local, state and national) uses to determine what its policy positions will be. It is a ground up process that is unique today and was unusual when the League started.

As the League does it, consensus is a structured process used to draw out the decisions of a group without taking an actual vote. Local Leagues are central to this method. When the League wants to establish a new position on a public policy issue, local Leagues form committees that study the topic, pro and con. For a national or state issue, the League at these levels does some of the research and provides background material. Local Leagues are free to do their own research as well.

Local Leagues then have consen-

sus meetings at which the committee presents the background, pro and con and the consensus questions. There is a discussion leader, whose job it is to bring everyone into the discussion of the questions, and a recorder, who takes notes on the discussion and records the sense of the group. At the end of the meeting or on a schedule determined by the discussion leader, the recorder reads back the conclusions of the group. The group will either agree or disagree that that was what was decided. If it disagrees, the process starts over until the group agrees that consensus has been reached.

The results of the consensus meeting are sent to the national League, in this case, and reports are tallied. The results form the National position on that issue.

IMMIGRATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A brief outline follows regarding several issues that are being discussed in the area of the effects of immigration on the environment:

1. **Wildlife habitat:**

a. Illegal immigrants create trails and have caused fires as a result of campfires in wildlife areas.

b. The border fences may create dead ends for wildlife movement.

c. Creation of border fences and enforcement roads may have disturbed wildlife areas affecting endangered species. The Army Corps of Engineers Study suggests the impacts have been minimal and reseeded/forested has taken place when necessary.

2. **Immigration**, both legal and illegal, increases the population of the United States, placing strains on US and world resources.

a. Are the current levels of immigrants sustainable over the long term? Obviously, US population growth is greater when we admit immigrants.

b. Immigrants tend to consume more when they immigrate to the US.

c. Water, energy, land use, etc. policies would need to change to accommodate large numbers of immigrants.

*Independent Task Force on Immigration and America's Future, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, September, 2006 -
Abraham, S. and Hamilton, L. (Co-Chairs)*

Executive Summary available on line at:
www.migrationpolicy.org

This report addresses the “dilemmas of illegal immigration...but reconciles the need to meet strong economic and social demands for legal immigration with the imperative to strengthen enforcement and safeguard national security.”

Benefits of Immigration:

1. Increases US productivity, helps sustain the growth and prosperity of the US.
2. Helps us maintain competitiveness in science, engineering and entrepreneurship.
3. Enriches the daily life of us all, what we eat, read, etc. Immigrants are successfully integrating into our society.

Challenges of Immigration:

1. Illegal immigration: 11-12 million illegal immigrants are in the US—nearly 1/3 of the country's foreign-born.
2. Temporary immigration: Temporary immigration has recently been used as a step to permanent immigration and is filling long term labor market needs. As a result the temporary program is meeting high skill needs, and illegal immigration is meeting low skill needs.
3. Overburdened system: The system does not work; it's totally broken. It takes a US citizen 14 years to bring an unmarried child to the US from Mexico.

4. Native Born Workforce: Illegal immigration can have negative impacts on wages at the bottom end of the pay scale, and unauthorized immigrant labor can lead to declining labor standards that undercut the position of native born workers.
5. Integration: State and local government must assume costs of integration. due to large numbers of immigrants settling in new places in the US, the services necessary for integration and basic local services such as health and education are not in place. any taxes that unauthorized immigrants pay, do not go to the local governments.
6. Security:
 - a. Borders are porous in spite of massive increases in funds and border security efforts.
 - b. Many border communities feel besieged.
 - c. Rules against employers hiring unauthorized immigrants are easily broken, manipulated, or under-enforced.
 - d. Citizens are concerned about terrorists obtaining fraudulent admission to the US.
 - e. Increased smuggling and dangerous border crossings have led to tragic migrant deaths and vigilantism, which poses risks to migrants and border communities.

THE RECOMMENDED IMMIGRATION POLICY

(quoted directly from migrationpolicy.org website)

Congress and the President should:

- ◆ Redesign and simplify the immigration system by establishing three streams for immigration—temporary, provisional and permanent. The new provisional cate-

gory provides a way to align immigration with current economic realities by creating visas for immigrants of all skill levels who have an offer of employment to enter the country legally. The number of

non-immigrant visa classifications would be reduced from 24 to 7 to streamline and make the system more transparent.

(continued on next page)

GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND IMMIGRATION

by Gail Sechrist, LWVIC Immigration Study Committee Member

Demographics

Mexico is the #1 source of immigrants; Central America is the #2 source. A change in Cuba's government or a worsening of conditions could increase the number of Cubans coming to the US.

Just-In-Time Delivery of Labor

Laborers communicate over the internet with friends and relatives about the availability of work, which is bringing immigrants into smaller cities, like Hazelton, PA. Because the immigrants know the labor market before they arrive, they quickly become employed.

Remittances

Foreign workers send \$60 billion annually to Latin America. This money bypasses government officials. Families use the money for basic necessities plus health care and education.

Unintended Effects of US Policies

Farm Subsidies to US farmers for corn, cotton, wheat, rice, and soy beans enable farmers to sell below cost, thus putting Mexican corn farmers out of business. In 2008, Mexico is required to comply with a NAFTA deadline to totally eliminate its corn and bean import tariffs. However, it does mean lower food prices for food and cattle feed.

Jobs In Mexico

NAFTA has caused Mexico to become a trade dependent country, but parts are imported, processed, and exported without enough value added. Trade has risen from 30% of the GNP in 1990 to 55% today, but real wages are down. Mexico's president is calling for more investment to create more jobs.

THE RECOMMENDED IMMIGRATION POLICY, continued

- ◆ Create an independent body in the Executive Branch that would introduce flexibility into the system by making regular recommendations to Congress and the President for adjusting immigration levels. Its recommendations would be based on ongoing analysis of labor market needs and changing economic and demographic trends.
- ◆ Provide employers with a verification mechanism that

allows them to comply with requirements for hiring only authorized workers, and develop a new, secure Social Security card that enables individuals to readily establish their work eligibility.

- ◆ Accelerate implementation of "Smart Border" measures that use equipment, personnel and cutting-edge technology more effectively and strengthen accountability by establishing measures of effectiveness and an annual progress report on meeting

them.

- ◆ Establish a national office to promote the integration of immigrants and provide a focal point at the federal level for state, local and private sector integration initiatives.
- ◆ Provide a path to legal status for unauthorized immigrants who can demonstrate steady employment, knowledge of English, payment of taxes, and passage of a background security check, among other requirements.

Public Briefings:

**Statewide Education Costing-Out Study, 7-9 pm
Dec 5—DuBois H.S.**

Dec 6— Allegheny IU #3, Homestead

Findings of a Statewide Education Costing-Out Study conducted in accordance with Act 114 of 2006. The study focuses on the adequacy and eq-

uity of school funding and determines what educational resources and related expenditures are required to provide a quality primary and secondary education for each student in the Commonwealth's public schools. Representatives of the State Board of Education and APA will conduct each public briefing. For more info: www.pde.state.pa.us/

Trivia Question: Of all states, which one was the only one that did not have an increase in foreign-born population between 2000 and 2006? (answer on page 4)

**Next Board Meeting of LWVIC: December 12, 2007 11:30 am at Diane Duntley's home
204 Greenview Ct. Indiana, PA 724-349-2718 All members and guests are welcome**

A newsletter of the
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UPCOMING CALENDAR

December 1 - Interclub Luncheon. AAUW to host—11:30 am Rustic Lodge Cost - \$15.00. contact Iris Holtz or Sherene Hess for reservations.

December 5,6 - Public Briefing on PA Dept of Education's Statewide costing out study (see pg 3)

December 12, 2007— 11:30 a.m. Board Meeting at Diane Duntley's home—business meeting to begin promptly at noon.

January 3, 2008—11:30 a.m. Board Meeting at Diane Duntley's

January 19, 2008—**Immigration Study Consensus meeting. Breakfast meeting at Fire Mountain, 9:00 am. SAVE THE DATE!**

Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let Olga Platt know at 724-465-2073 and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWVIC's activities.

HAWAII