

## **LWVUS positions that relate to Immigration**

We League members have already studied and arrived at consensus on a number of areas that affect immigration policy. They provide us with a base from which to discuss other studies, and perhaps we do not need to go back over those areas. Preservation of natural resources, social, fiscal, and energy policies, and health care all directly affect both population increase pressures and quality of life in the U.S.---areas that are significantly impacted by immigrants.

Obviously, those positions that specifically apply to citizens have little direct effect on the immigration study except in the context of immigrants who are family members of citizens. The "anchor baby" is an example of that.

Perhaps our most applicable already established position (1973, updated 2002) on the national level relates to Trade policy. We have a fairly detailed position on liberal trade policies which would promote a higher standard of living for people in a global sense. Removal or prevention of trade barriers could affect the demand and production of goods and services, and, of course, where the goods are produced and the services are performed will directly affect immigration policy and motivation of foreign nationals to live and work in the U.S. If poverty can be reduced in the home country, the need to leave will be lessened. Quality of life issues and population pressures in developing countries are dealt with in very specific terms as high priorities.

League members in 1986 arrived at detailed positions on U.S. Relations with Developing Countries. The positions show our desire to encourage and help developing countries as they become producers of exports. Again, if products and services can be produced or performed in foreign countries, incentives for emigration are reduced.

On the national level, we undertook a comprehensive Agriculture Policy study, reaching consensus in 1988, and that bears on one of the most controversial aspects of immigration policy: migrant farm workers. To keep agriculture sustainable and cost-effective, immigration offers the solution of non-mechanized labor at low cost. A source of low-cost labor keeps family farms viable and consumer food prices reasonable. We in the League favor a free agriculture market rather than government price supports. Migrant workers enable reasonable food prices and reduce the need for government programs meant to encourage small and mid-sized farm operations and to preserve a healthy and desirable way of life in rural communities. On the other hand, the introduction of foreign culture to those communities is an unwelcome influence to some, if not many, agriculture-dependent community members.

When the League dealt with Social Policy issues (1969,1972,1980,1989), members reached sweeping consensus opposing discrimination on almost any basis. We charged government with providing broad opportunities for employment, housing, and education. Prevention and reduction of poverty are our goals, and minority integration is a priority. These positions avoid limiting benefits to citizens and specify that they apply to "individuals."

The national study on Health Care, completed in 1993, resulted in a position of support for access to a basic level of care for all U.S. residents, again avoiding the limitation of citizenship.

The League's position on The Presidency (1976, 1984) supports executive agreements with foreign countries, and these could relate to immigration. Also, the Presidency position deals with declaration of emergencies, and some people consider today's immigration to be an emergency situation. Our members believe the President should have some fiscal powers and that the President should manage the budget consistent with priorities set by Congress. The federal treasury benefits when some immigrants pay Social Security taxes though they are not entitled to receive any benefits from the system. At the same time there are significant costs resulting from federal immigration policies, most of which are borne by state governments. (It seems League members have no position that applies directly to mandates unfunded by the federal government.)

Acknowledging that there are applicable positions, there are some gaps as well. Many regard national security as compromised if immigration is not controlled and monitored. The League's National Defense positions do not address risks to freedom from crime and terrorism. A government-issued secure identity card (SID) could enable employers to verify an applicant's citizenship or visa status and determine if an immigrant could legally work in the U.S. Leaguers lobby against voter identification requirements such as showing a birth certificate because enforcement of such laws can be used to prevent people from voting. The League does not have a position on a national identify card or SID, but the LWVUS board and those on the national level's Immigration Committee would like to know what members think of this idea.