



IMPACT ON ISSUES

International Relations

LWV

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

A commitment to international cooperation as an essential path to world peace is deeply rooted in League history. Founded just after World War I, the League rejected a policy of isolationism as “neither wise nor possible for this nation.” The League’s commitment has taken many forms. Action to support free trade began during the Depression and support for aid to developing countries in the 1950s. As World War II ended, the League launched a nationwide campaign to build public understanding of the agreements setting up the United Nations and was proud to be one of the nongovernmental organizations (NGO) first affiliated with the UN, a relationship that continues today.

In the 1960s, the League played an important role in educating citizens and creating the climate for normalization of US relations with the People’s Republic of China. Also in the 1960s, after a reappraisal of trade policy, the League acted to reduce trade barriers while supporting assistance for economic adjustment in the United States. Throughout the 1970s, the League was active on trade issues, working for the history-making multilateral process that built a new structure for international trade.

In the 1980s, positions on Arms Control and on Military Policy and Defense Spending added new dimensions to the League’s international relations efforts. With these positions, the League supported international negotiations and agreements to reduce the risk of war and prevent the development and deployment of nuclear weapons and worked against the costly, technologically suspect, and destabilizing national missile defense program.

Adoption of a US Relations with Developing Countries position in 1986 provided further definition to the League’s efforts to promote peace, with special emphasis on human rights, sound management of natural resources, and economic development.

In the 1990s, the League launched training and education projects to build political participation in emerging democracies. Beginning in nations from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and extending to Africa and the Americas, the League experience has proved invaluable in developing the potential for citizen participation and NGOs in democratic systems, especially for women leaders.

In the 2000s, the League expanded its global democracy program and updated its positions on the United Nations and International Trade. The League continued its strong support for the UN, added its support for the International Criminal Court and endorsed enhanced peace operations. The League reiterated its support for measures to expand international trade, while recognizing the importance of protecting environmental, labor, and political values.

UNITED NATIONS

The League’s Position

Statement of Position on the United Nations, as announced by the national board, June 1977, and updated, June 2002:

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports a strong, effective United Nations and endorses the full and active participation of the United States in the UN system. The League supports UN efforts to:

- **Promote international peace and security.**



- Advance the social and economic well-being of the world's people.
- Ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Foster trust and cooperation among nations by encouraging adherence to conventions, treaties, and other international agreements.
- Protect the integrity of the world environment.
- Achieve the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of civil and political life.

The United Nations should be an important component of US foreign policy. The League supports US policies that strengthen the UN's capacity to solve global problems and promote prosperity throughout the world. The United States should work actively and constructively within the UN system, exercising diplomatic leadership in advance of decision-making. The United States should not place conditions on its participation in the United Nations, except in the most extreme cases, such as flagrant violations of the Charter.

The League supports UN leadership in a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to promoting world peace and security that includes ongoing efforts to eliminate the underlying causes of conflict. UN peace operations should include such strategies as:

- An increased emphasis on preventive diplomacy and the use of such techniques as an early warning system to identify possible threats to peace and mediation to help resolve disputes.
- Preventive deployment of UN peacekeepers to forestall the outbreak of hostilities.
- Enhanced capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to contain conflict and establish a just and stable peace.
- UN peacekeeping operations that have strong political and financial support from the world community and the consent of the local parties.
- Military intervention, as a last resort, to halt genocide and other crimes against humanity and to prevent the spread of conflict.
- Protection of civilian populations, including protection of displaced persons.
- Long-term commitment, both pre- and post-conflict, to establishing the institutions and conditions needed for real economic and social development.
- Enhanced capacity at UN headquarters to plan, manage, and support UN peace operations.

The United States should support all aspects of UN peace operations. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have an important role to play in peace operations, including participating in behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts and providing humanitarian aid.

The League strongly supports the central role of the United Nations in addressing the social, economic, and humanitarian needs of all people. The advancement and empowerment of women is fundamental to achieving peace and prosperity and should be a high priority for UN programs. Other areas for emphasis include:

- Eradicating poverty and hunger.
- Improving basic living standards worldwide.
- Promoting the well-being and potential of children, with special attention to the girl child.
- Promoting human and political rights.
- Ensuring access to a basic education for all.
- Ensuring a basic level of health care for all.
- Protecting the environment and the world's natural resources.

The League supports efforts to strengthen the development and humanitarian work of the United Nations through greater coordination among agencies, more efficient use of resources, additional funding as required, and more partnerships with NGOs and other non-state actors. UN-sponsored world conferences are valuable forums for building international consensus and developing practical plans of action to solve global problems.

The United States should provide strong leadership and financial support to the UN specialized agencies, participate constructively in international conferences, and fulfill all agreed-upon commitments.

The League believes that world peace and progress rest in part on a body of international law developed through conventions, covenants, and treaties and on the judgments of international courts. Disputes between nations should be considered and settled in the International Court of Justice, and its judicial decisions should be honored.

The League supports the creation of a permanent international tribunal, such as the International Criminal Court, to try individuals charged with crimes of genocide, war crimes, and other systematic crimes against humanity.

All court procedures must meet the highest judicial standards, including guarantees of due process protections and the integrity and impartiality of the courts' officials.

The League supports full US participation in the international judicial system and US ratification and observance of international treaties and conventions consistent with LWVUS principles and positions.

The League supports the basic principles of the UN Charter. The League supports one-nation, one-vote in the General Assembly, the veto power in the Security Council, and a strong, effective office of the Secretary-General. The League supports measures to make the Security Council a more representative body that better reflects the diverse interests of UN member nations and the world's people. The United States should work to encourage member nations to consider the needs of the world and avoid divisive politicization of issues.

Member nations have the collective responsibility to provide the resources necessary for the UN to carry out its mandates, with each providing financial contributions commensurate with its ability to pay. The United States should meet its financial obligations to the UN on time, in full, and without conditions.

League History

At the first League Convention in 1920, delegates called for “adhesion of the United States to the League of Nations with least possible delay,” in recognition of the need for a mechanism to facilitate settlement of international disputes. When the issue of US participation in the League of Nations turned into a bitter partisan battle, active League support did not materialize until 1932.

During World War II, the League, conscious of its earlier hesitancy, began to study “US participation in the making and execution of plans for worldwide reconstruction and for a postwar organization for peace to eventually include all peoples, regardless of race, religion, or political persuasion.” In 1944, the League supported “US membership in an international organization for the peaceful settlement of disputes, with the machinery to handle economic, social, and political problems.”

Even before the United Nations was formally established, the League launched an unprecedented nationwide campaign to help build public understanding of the Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods agreements to establish



the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. The League trained more than 5,000 speakers and distributed more than a million brochures during a six-month period. At the UN Charter Conference in 1945, the League was one of 42 NGOs invited by President Truman to serve as consultants to the US delegation. Since then, the League has maintained a presence at the United Nations through its UN Observers; working with UN agencies, member states, and other NGOs to advance LWVUS positions; and by periodically hosting League Day at the UN for League members.

The League's UN position evolved through continued study. By 1948, the League called for strengthening the United Nations and its specialized agencies through increased use, adequate financial contributions, and improved procedures. It also supported the UN's peacekeeping functions. In 1962, the League evaluated "means of strengthening the UN under present conditions," most notably heightened antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In 1976, the League reexamined the UN system "with emphasis on relations between developed and developing countries and their implications for US policy." Members studied how world issues had changed alignments at the United Nations from a primarily East-West to an increasingly rich-nation/poor-nation focus and its effect on US participation in the UN system. The result was a resounding reaffirmation of support for a strengthened UN system and agreement that the United States should work constructively within the UN to further our foreign policy goals.

The League consistently monitors US actions at the UN, engaging in programs at the US Mission and providing support for mutually held policies. The League continues to urge adequate funding for the UN, by regular assessments and voluntary contributions, full payment of US financial obligations to the UN, and full US participation in the UN system.

In addition to supporting increased use and strength of the UN peacekeeping machinery under the UN position in support of "continuing efforts to reduce the risk of war," the League has lobbied for Senate ratification of certain disarmament measures, notably the UN-negotiated nuclear nonproliferation treaty. Leagues' efforts in their communities to develop public understanding and awareness of UN accomplishments, limitations, and potential took on special significance in 1995 when the League celebrated its 75th anniversary and the United Nations its 50th.

In 1995, the League participated in the UN 4th World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum on Women in Beijing, sponsoring workshops on Organizing Candidate Debates and Making Democracy Work®: Strategies for Grassroots Organization, Education, and Advocacy. This was followed in 1999 with a League co-sponsored regional conference of the President's Interagency Council on Women, Women 2000: Beijing Plus Five, to prepare for the Special Session of the General Assembly, Women 2000, Gender Equality, Development, and Peace for the Twenty-First Century, which LWVUS UN Observers were accredited to attend in 2000.

In 1997, the League was granted Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which provides the opportunity to intervene on issues the League supports. We joined other NGOs in submitting an official statement on behalf of the girl child that was presented at the UN Commission on the Status of Women meeting in March 2000. As a result of interventions, the League has successfully launched and supported the Working Group on Girls (WGG), a coalition of 80+ NGOs dedicated to focusing governments on the plight of girls



throughout the world. The International Day of the Girl is also celebrated around the world as a result of League and WGG efforts. Women in Saudi Arabia enjoy the right to vote after the League provided an intervention that linked women's enfranchisement with GDP.

League activity on women- and girl-related issues continued in the 2000s. In 2002, LWVUS submitted testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in support of Senate ratification of the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The League joined other NGOs in official statements to the UN Commission on the Status of Women: advocating protection of girls' rights in a lifecycle approach to gender issues in 2004; emphasizing that financing for girls' equality and the empowerment of girls is a basic and sound strategy for the implementation of all human rights in 2008. The League also joined the United Nation's campaign UNITE to End Violence against Women, 2008 – 2015, whose overall objective is raising public awareness and increasing political will and resources for preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide. In 2011, as the move to ratify CEDAW continued, LWVUS submitted testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Civil and Constitutional Rights.

Since then, the League, in coordination with WGG, developed a comprehensive strategy to prevent sexual human trafficking at major events. This strategy was adopted by the Special Representative to the UN Secretary General to Prevent Violence Against Children in her work with member states on preventing violence. It was also adopted by Brazil and implemented at its 2014 World Cup and Mardi Gras, as well as by the New Jersey Attorney General for the 2014 Super Bowl. The United States included components of the strategy in its 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report.

In 2002, the League urged President George W. Bush to work with the UN to develop clear policy goals and actions regarding the US's possible intervention in Iraq. On initiation of combat operations, the League's Board issued a statement saying that continued diplomatic efforts through the UN would have better served international unity and military force should have been used only as a tool of last resort.

Leagues nationwide work to realize the United Nations' Millennium Goals outlined by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at the September 2000 Millennium Summit and adopted by 191 states. In 2005, the League urged the administration to support the goals of the UN's 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, an historic effort to end global poverty, promote peace, and strengthen the UN, and urged Congress to reject the *United Nations Reform Act*.

In June 2014, the League formally adopted a position opposing human trafficking. As a result of that position, the LWVUS UN Observers are focusing efforts in the areas of demand and labor trafficking.

In 2015, League members had the opportunity to directly voice their opinions and witness UN conferences through the use of technology. By voting on the Goals We Want, LWV members had an opportunity to encourage the adoption of post-2015 goals seeking to eliminate severe world poverty, encourage mandatory education for girls and boys at the primary and secondary levels, and improve women's economic and political empowerment.

In recent years, the LWVUS UN Observer team's work has centered on aligning the domestic and international policy portfolios around the Campaign for Making Democracy Work and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In particular, the Observer team has focused on SDG3 (Health & Well-Being), SDG5



(Gender Equality), SDG13 (Climate Action) and SDG16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by working to personify the lessons learned at the UN (thinking globally) with League vision (acting locally).

During the summer of 2019, the UN Observer Corps worked to align its objectives and goals with the LWVUS national program agenda. The UN Observer Corps Objectives included two pillars under the campaign for Making Democracy Work®: Improving Elections and Voting Rights, and its work also focused on several policy positions including Climate Change, Health Care, and Violence Prevention.

In fall 2019, the UN Observers partnered with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to host an event on violence against women at the nation's capital. Several Members of Parliament attended, including representatives from Mexico, Kenya, and Iceland. The event was sponsored by Representatives Debbie Lesko, Jackie Speier, and Dan Kildee, and was moderated by Reuters. Both Board President Chris Carson and LWVUS Chief Executive Officer Virginia Kase Solomón attended the program. The program centered on the increasing instances of violence aimed at female politicians and their overall impact on female leaders around the world. Several members of Congress also attended: Representatives Debbie Lesko, Barbara Lee, and Bonnie Watson Coleman. Each representative spoke on the importance of continuing to elevate this issue and the importance of female political leaders.

In the 2020 – 2022 biennium, the global COVID-19 pandemic put many activities on pause internationally and the work moved to more virtual spaces. In 2021, LWVUS introduced a rigorous new recruitment and application process that resulted in a new LWVUS UN Chief Observer, Connie Sobón Sensor, installed four new members to the UN Observer team with two continuing members, and were assigned two board liaisons. Each member serves a three-year renewable term. The team also sent 12 individuals to the COP26 conference in Glasgow. The LWVUS Observer team hosted a side event. For the first time, due to a generous donor, two participants received scholarships to attend.

The newly installed LWVUS UN Observer team spent its first year (2021) participating in a variety of committees and activities dealing with global issues of climate change, human trafficking, and women's economic and political empowerment. For Women's Equality Day, the UN Observers took time to honor all women and girls working towards liberty and equality despite the Afghanistan conflict. The UN Chief was elected to the Global NGO Executive Committee, which works to build a closer relationship between UN and NGOs. The LWVUS UN Observer group also signed on to several collective statements, including the No Climate Justice without Debt Justice Campaign; International Alliance of Women focused on UN CW66, which was a statement focused on elevating the need for policies and programs to protect the rights and well-being of women around the world; and the Women Gender Constituencies Key Demands for COP16. The group also moderated a side event at COP26 on Disabilities and Climate where the ambassador of Finland, Human Rights Watch, McGill University, and Global Action on Disability Network provided remarks. LWVUS also openly supported the US rejoining the Paris Agreement. In spring of 2022, the LWVUS UN Observer team organized and sponsored an event during the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) entitled Climate Change Threats to Democratic Elections: Preparing for the Worst featuring a panel of experts. In prior years the team hosted We Have Your Back – Ending the cycle of online violence against women and girl leaders with Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN Women, Trinidad & Tobago, Canada, Albania, and other NGOs. To close out the biennium, Chief LWVUS UN Observer Sensor, in her role as co-chair of the Global NGO Executive Committee Programs and Briefings Committee,



organized and moderated a communication workshop in collaboration with the UN Department of Global Communications Civil Society Unit, which was open to the global NGO community.

TRADE

The League's Positions

Statement of Position on Liberal Trade Policies announced by the national board, June 1973 and updated, April 2002:

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports a liberal US trade policy aimed at reducing trade barriers and expanding international trade. Such a policy helps foster international cooperation, democratic values, and economic prosperity at home and abroad as well as benefiting consumers through lowered prices, expanded choice, and improved products and services. The League believes that US trade policy should be based on the long-term public interest, not on special interests, and should advance the achievement of other important policy goals, including:

- Improvement of basic living standards worldwide; reduction of inequalities within and among nations.
- Protection of the environment and global natural resources.
- Respect for human, labor, religious, and political rights.
- Improvement of labor conditions around the world.

The League endorses the worldwide systematic reduction of tariffs, subsidies, and quotas. The League also supports the reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade consistent with the goals and strategies set forth in this position statement. Administrative and customs procedures should be efficient and flexible.

The League supports US participation in an international trade organization aimed at promoting worldwide economic growth via an open trading system. This organization should have the power to hold nations accountable for commitments made in multilateral trade treaties and should recognize the legitimacy of international agreements in the areas of the environment, labor, and human rights. Its proceedings should be open to scrutiny by the public, the press, and non-governmental organizations. The public should have timely access to a wide range of its documents, and its dispute settlement process should allow friend-of-the-court briefs.

The organization should recognize the legitimacy of a country's measures in the areas of the environment, health, labor, and human rights that are more stringent than international standards or than those of its trading partners. These measures should not discriminate between domestic products and imports and should not be used as a pretext for restricting the flow of trade. The League believes that trade agreements should be negotiated multilaterally in the broadest possible international forum. Regional and bilateral trade agreements can be useful steppingstones to broader trade liberalization but should not be allowed to block progress in multilateral negotiations nor to marginalize poor countries.

The League believes that the US trade policy-making process should be open, transparent, and efficient and should advance League trade policy goals. The President should be given the authority to negotiate trade agreements within prior guidelines and conditions set by Congress. Congress should have an adequate but limited time period to debate and accept or reject the resulting proposed agreements, without amendment.



Congress should take an active part in the policy-making process, establishing trade priorities and negotiating objectives and observing and monitoring trade negotiations. Congress should have the resources and staff expertise necessary to fulfill its trade responsibilities. The trade policy-making processes of both Congress and the executive branch should include meaningful opportunities for input from a broad range of public interest perspectives, as well as from business interests, and should include timely assessment of the impact of proposed trade agreements.

The League supports a variety of trade-related strategies to protect the environment and promote labor, political, religious, and human rights, including:

- Trade negotiations and trade agreements that lead to progress on environmental and social objectives.
- Monitoring and reporting of countries' practices and performance in these areas.
- Recognition of the legitimacy of multilateral environmental agreements.
- Strengthening the International Labor Organization and promoting ratification of ILO core labor rights.
- Promoting ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and similar international agreements.
- International sanctions aimed at ending egregious violations of human rights.
- Legitimate labeling and certification programs (e.g., eco-labeling).
- Protection of endangered species.
- Elimination of environmentally and economically harmful subsidies and incentives (e.g., for fishing, timber, agriculture).
- Codes of conduct to encourage responsible business practices in these areas (e.g., guarding against abusive child labor).
- Domestic regulations and practices that advance environmental and social goals and that are not a pretext for restricting trade.
- Aid to developing countries to improve their ability to create and enforce national laws protecting the environment and human and labor rights.

The League supports trade and related policies that address the special needs of developing countries, with emphasis on economic growth and improving income distribution. The League supports such measures as:

- Priority elimination of tariffs and quotas on exports of developing countries.
- Longer adjustment periods and financial and technical assistance for implementation of trade commitments.
- Special measures to ensure access to essential medicines.
- Financial and technical assistance to enable developing countries to participate effectively in the world trading system.
- Financial aid for infrastructure improvements.
- Policies that recognize the special circumstances of developing countries in the areas of food security and transition to the world trading system.

The League supports strong US leadership in, and financial support of, international institutions and programs that reduce poverty and address the special needs of developing countries in the areas of the environment and human and labor rights.

The League supports measures to address the adverse impact of international trade on domestic workers, firms, and industries. Training, education, and safety net programs — such as cash assistance, relocation assistance, and health care — should be enhanced and made easily available to dislocated workers, whether or not a trade connection can be made. Portability of health care coverage, pension rights, and other fringe benefits should also be assured. The League supports temporary trade barriers consistent with international trade rules to permit firms seriously injured by surging import competition to adjust to changed conditions.

League History

The League's longstanding interest in world trade has its origins in a 1920 study of high postwar prices. This study and another on the economic causes of war convinced the League that high tariffs and restrictive trade practices add to consumer prices, reduce competition in the marketplace, and cause friction among nations. The Depression accentuated the impact of high tariffs and moved the League to act for the first time on trade matters. The League was involved with every major piece of trade legislation until 2010, always strongly supporting measures that expand rather than restrict trade.

After an extensive reappraisal in the early 1960s, the League urged that the United States systematically reduce trade barriers; delegate long-term, flexible negotiating authority to the executive; and use trade adjustment assistance as a positive alternative to import restrictions. In 1965, the League added another dimension — support for measures to relax restrictions on trade with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The 1972 Convention, during a time of dollar devaluation and balance-of-trade deficits, asked Leagues to reexamine trade policies to find new ways to help the economy adjust to changing trade patterns, especially measures to counter rising protectionist sentiment. The revised 1973 position in support of liberal trade policies placed a new emphasis on expanding and improving adjustment assistance programs.

The League vigorously supported the *Trade Act of 1974*, which led to US participation in the Tokyo Round of tariff negotiations under the auspices of the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)*. In 1979, the League mounted a major lobbying effort to assure implementation of the Tokyo Round of multilateral trade negotiations agreements designed to establish a fair, open, and disciplined trading structure for the next decade. Throughout the five years of negotiations, the League worked to deflect protectionist efforts in Congress to block the negotiations. Through its efforts, the League helped assure overwhelming passage of the *Trade Agreements Act of 1979*, the largest single trade bill in US history. Attempts to undermine the trade agreements have been vigorously opposed by the League.

The League also has been instrumental in promoting measures to improve trade opportunities for developing countries and in defeating protectionist amendments to foreign assistance appropriation bills. The League strongly supported the *Trade and International Economic Policy Reform Act of 1987* and worked to defeat restrictive amendments.

In 2002, the League voiced its opposition to providing President George W. Bush with new negotiating authority for trade agreements because the proposed authority did not adequately provide for protecting environmental, labor, and political values as part of trade agreements.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the League sent a letter to the Biden administration asking him to allow low- and middle-income countries access to COVID-19 vaccines by waiving intellectual property rights provided for



in World Trade Organization rules. This action is based in LWVUS past work on trade policy. The League also joined housing justice coalitions in urging the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission to use their authority to enforce the eviction moratorium and protect renters and homeowners. This housing justice coalition letter urged the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission to use their authority to enforce the eviction moratorium and protect renters and homeowners. This ask came in addition to advocacy in Congress and with President Biden for a more robust and expansive eviction moratorium. in addition to advocacy in Congress and with President Biden for a more robust and expansive eviction moratorium.

US RELATIONS WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The League's Positions

Statement of Position on US Relations with Developing Countries, as announced by the national board, April 1986:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that US interests in developing countries should reflect the reality of global interdependence. Paramount among these interests are reducing the risk of military conflict, promoting the sound management of global resources, protecting human rights, stimulating economic growth, and improving the quality of life in developing countries. US policies toward developing countries should not be based on maintaining US preeminence.

LWVUS strongly believes that development assistance, which is designed to meet the long-term social and economic needs of developing countries, is the most effective means of promoting legitimate US interests. Military assistance and the direct military involvement of US forces are not appropriate means to further the League's stated paramount interests in developing countries.

Developing countries should not be the pawns or the playing fields for geopolitical competition. The relationship between the superpowers should not be an important factor in determining US policies toward developing countries. LWVUS supports efforts to reduce international competition in developing countries, including:

- **Enhancing the role of the United Nations and other multilateral organizations.**
- **Supporting regional approaches to conflict resolution.**
- **Encouraging cooperative efforts to promote the sound management of global resources and improve the quality of life.**
- **Promoting measures to reduce tensions and increase communication, including scientific and cultural exchanges and other cooperative programs.**

Statement of Position on International Development Assistance, as announced by the national board, April 1970, and revised, April 1986:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that long-term requirements for world peace, humanitarian obligations, and long-range national interests demand US policies that help developing countries reach self-sustaining economic growth.

League members understand that the development process encompasses more than economic growth and urge that the focus be on the human concerns of development and on an improved quality of life for the people of developing countries. US development assistance policies should enhance human dignity and fulfill basic human



needs. The policies should be coordinated with other development efforts, and they should respect cultural differences. The League favors greater participation by the recipient nations in the planning and execution of development programs. The development effort should be one of a partnership between developed and developing countries. Development programs should be long-range, adequately financed, and effectively coordinated and administered.

League members recognize that population pressures affect all other aspects of the development process. The League supports US efforts to assist other nations in their population planning programs, in accordance with the culture and mores of each country. The League also emphasizes strongly the importance of programs for nutrition, health, employment, and education.

The League advocates that the proportion of US assistance given through multilateral channels should be substantially increased, with concurrent efforts being made to strengthen the multilateral agencies where necessary.

The League deems it essential that the trend of reduced aid be reversed and that US contributions for development assistance be increased.

League members believe that aid alone is not enough to meet the needs of developing countries. Measures other than direct grants and loans must be utilized. The League advocates such measures as reduced tied aid, prevention and relief of debt burdens, and changed patterns of trade. The US government must ensure that its trade, monetary, political, and military policies do not subvert the goals of its development policies. The League also urges active participation in the development process by the private sector.

The League recognizes the gross disparity in trading positions between developed and developing countries. The exports of developing countries must be expanded if they are to broaden their economic base and improve their people's standard of living. Because of their need for greater access to US and other industrialized countries' markets, the League favors generalized, temporary preferential tariff treatment and certain commodity arrangements for developing countries. The principle of reciprocity in trade agreements, which the League supports, should be waived in order to make special trade concessions to developing countries.

Statement of Position on Private Investment and Commodity Arrangements, as announced by the national board, April 1964 and revised, April 1970:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that private investment of US capital in developing countries can be an important supplemental means of helping these countries reach self-sustaining economic growth. In order to facilitate the flow of private capital to those developing countries that most need it and that can use it most advantageously, appropriate safeguards are necessary against risks for both the investor and the developing countries. In order to protect outside investors against risks, the League favors continuation of governmental assistance, such as pre-investment surveys, investment guarantees, and investment loans.

The League believes that tax credits on funds invested in developing countries could provide additional encouragement. In order to guard against risks for the developing country, the League believes that investors should be encouraged to engage in joint-venture-type investments with local businesses, to seek matching investment funds within the country, to employ and train as high a proportion of local personnel as possible



for responsible positions, and to send to these countries carefully chosen, well-briefed US representatives. The League welcomes continued efforts by developing countries to encourage their citizens to invest more in their own countries' development efforts and to create a more favorable climate for public and private investment through appropriate internal reforms.

International commodity arrangements serve as a short-term supplement to long-run efforts to promote self-sustaining growth in developing countries.

Insofar as commodity arrangements can help moderate sharp fluctuations in the price of primary products and help stabilize the export income of developing countries, they can serve a useful, though necessarily short-term, purpose.

Each commodity arrangement should be evaluated on its own merit. Such arrangements should be flexible and open to renegotiation within a reasonable period of time.

Each arrangement needs careful supervision and regular review in order not to inhibit diversification within these countries of land, labor, and capital or to distort international patterns of trade. These arrangements might include such compensatory financing efforts as those initiated under the International Monetary Fund.

If any commodity arrangement is to bear fruit, primary-product countries should be encouraged through technical and financial assistance to diversify both their primary-product and industrial position. If diversification efforts are not to be frustrated, the developed countries, including the United States, need to open their export doors wider, to a broader range of imports – whether raw materials, semiprocessed, or finished goods. In order to help the United States meet new competition, greater use might be made of trade adjustment assistance to affected US industries and workers.

The League recognizes that continuation of freer trade policies and reduction of various trade barriers are essential to improve the terms of trade of developing countries.

League History

The League's work on development issues began in the 1920s, when members studied the economic and social work of various international organizations. In 1940, the League studied proposals for closer economic and cultural relations between the United States and other American republics, including possible financial and technical cooperation. After World War II, the League supported the implementation of the Marshall Plan and President Truman's Point Four Program as part of its commitment to international efforts to support the poor and emerging nations of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America.

The League's position on Development Assistance evolved through two restudies in 1964 and 1970. The latter reiterated the need for separating development from military aid. The League supported the "basic needs" approach mandated by Congress in 1973 and adopted by the Agency for International Development (AID).

In the 1980s, the League's Development Assistance position was revised to reflect the results of the study of US Relations with Developing Countries. Members reviewed current trends in trade, development assistance, and the United Nations. They also examined US commitments to developing countries, criteria for evaluating development and military assistance, and the role of US-Soviet relations in determining US policies toward developing countries.



The resulting 1986 position emphasizes development assistance over military assistance as the most effective means of meeting the long-term social and economic needs of developing countries and downplays the role of international competition in determining US policies toward developing countries. In 1986, the League urged Congress to reject aid that included military assistance to Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries (“contras”) and address the region’s long-term social and economic needs. In 1987, the League pressured Congress to increase development and humanitarian aid in the foreign aid budget.

In the 1990s, LWVEF began a series of global outreach projects that led to the current Global Democracy Program. Thinking Globally was designed to educate Americans about the links between their communities and the developing world.

Outreach in Europe in the 1990s led to the Global Community Dialogue program in 1992 with the Building Political Participation in Poland initiative and subsequent citizen exchange projects to share grassroots skills with people in Hungary, Russia, Ukraine, the American Republics, and Africa.

In 1996, LWVEF opened a US coordination office for absentee voting in the post-war elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In an unprecedented effort to enfranchise Bosnian refugees and displaced persons residing in 55 countries for elections in 1996, 1997, and 1998, the League worked with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the Bosnian Citizen Get-Out-the-Vote Campaign. LWVEF formed a partnership with the League of Women Voters’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina to help women take an effective role in the post-war reconstruction process.

Beginning in 2005, the League participated in The Open World Leadership Center’s Civic Hosting Program, first introducing Russian leaders to US democracy and subsequently hosting visitors from Ukraine and Central Asia.

Outreach in Africa started in the late 1990s when LWVEF joined Civitas Africa to share methodologies, tools, and experiences with civic education groups. A citizen exchange program in Sub-Saharan Africa with grassroots organizations and activists, Woman Power in Politics: Building Grassroots Democracy in Africa, was initiated with League members traveling to Africa as co-trainers in democracy-building skills until 2002. The League also worked with four nongovernmental organizations in Malawi to train thousands of poll monitors as civil society observers on Election Day 2004. It joined with the National Council of Women of Kenya to sponsor Kenyans Working Together for Good Governance: Civil Society, Government, and Members of Parliament in 2006, including an exchange program between Kenyan citizens and League staff.

In early 2012, citing the League’s outstanding record of nonpartisanship in advocating and promoting informed political participation in government, the US government selected the League to serve as its nongovernmental partner in the 2012 G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENA).

The year-long initiative had as its ultimate goal to achieve agreement among the G8 and regions’ foreign ministers on the language of the final declaration of the 9th Forum for the Future, the culminating meeting of the initiative. The second goal was to achieve civil society and private sector agreement on the recommendations forwarded to the governments. Both goals were achieved due to a steady building of trust among the participants as a result of the hard work of the League, the US government, the Republic of Tunisia, and the three NGO participants.



Outreach in the Americas began with Making Democracy Work in the Americas, at the Vital Voices of the Americas conference in 1998, followed by the League hosting women civic leaders and officials from Latin America in 1999.

In the 2000s, the League completed a successful program in Brazil called Women in Political Leadership, was invited by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) to join a team of international election observers for Paraguayan elections, sponsored Women in the Americas: Paths to Political Power, and participated in the State Department-sponsored exchange Connecting Civil Society and Future Legislators from Colombia and Brazil.

Between 2010 – 2012, the League attended an international conference in La Havana, Cuba, organized by the Gender Department of the University of La Havana, titled Women in the XXI Century. The League also accepted invitations to work with women in democratic transitions in Tunisia and Egypt in North Africa; in Antananarivo, Madagascar, in Africa; in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in South Asia; and in Belgrade, Serbia, in Southeast Europe.

In 2019, the United Nations continued its work to raise the visibility of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 16 (SDG) around peace, justice, and strong institutions by organizing a discussion during the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) alongside several partners, including Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN Women, Trinidad & Tobago, Canada, Albania, and other NGOs to discuss Critical Mass to Gender Parity—Women in Decision-Making DO Make a Difference. The UN Observers focus their work around three of the SDGs: Gender Equality, Climate Action, and Think Globally, Act Locally.

ARMS CONTROL

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Arms Control, as announced by the national board, December 1983 and updated by the 2010 Convention:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that arms-control measures are essential to reduce the risk of war and increase global stability.

Toward that end, the US government should give the highest level of importance to arms control efforts that:

- **Limit or reduce the quantity of weapons.**
- **Limit proliferation and prohibit first use of nuclear weapons.**
- **Prohibit first use and possession of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons.**
- **Prohibit explosive testing of nuclear weapons.**
- **Reduce tensions in order to prevent situations in which weapons might be used.**

While these objectives should receive the highest level of attention, the US government should also negotiate measures that inhibit the development and improvement of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons that increase incentives to attack first in a period of crisis.

As a goal of international negotiations, the League supports the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons.

The League of Women Voters recognizes that peace in an interdependent world is a product of cooperation among nations and therefore strongly favors multilateral negotiations. Leadership by the United States in advancing arms control measures through negotiations and periodic review is encouraged.



Given the potential for worldwide proliferation of nuclear technology, efforts involving all countries are essential to limit the spread of nuclear weapons and to protect commonly held nuclear weapons-free regions such as the seabed and outer space. Multilateral efforts are appropriate as well to achieve bans on the possession of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons; and to achieve limitations on the transfer or trade of all weapons.

The League of Women Voters also supports bilateral arms control efforts which may be especially appropriate in negotiations to limit, safeguard, and reduce quantities of weapons. The League believes that unilateral initiatives are not the most appropriate means to achieve arms control.

The League does not support tying progress in arms control to other issues. The League believes that arms control is too important in and of itself and too crucial to all nations to be linked to other foreign and military policy goals.

The League of Women Voters believes that arms control measures should be evaluated in terms of the following factors:

Equity

The terms should be mutually beneficial, and each nation's security and interests should be adequately protected, as should the security of all nations. Equity does not necessarily require equality in numbers of weapons but may be achieved through a relative balance in capabilities.

Verifiability

Each party should be able to ensure that other parties comply with the terms of the agreement, whether using national technical means (such as satellites, seismic sensors, and electronic monitors) or on-site inspection. The League recognizes the role that multilateral and international institutions can play in assisting verification efforts and believes it is extremely important to ensure compliance, acknowledging that absolute certainty is unattainable.

Equity and verifiability are critical in efforts to limit and reduce quantities of weapons and to prohibit the possession and spread of nuclear weapons.

Confidence-Building

Each party should be assured of the political or military intentions of other parties. Fostering confidence is vital in efforts to stem the development and proliferation of weapons and prohibit their first use, and to reduce tensions.

Widespread Agreement

All appropriate parties should participate in and approve the results of the negotiating process. However, the League recognizes that, in specific cases, progress can be achieved even though some key parties do not participate.

Environmental Protection

The quality of the earth's environment should be protected from the effects of weapons testing or use. Environmental protection has special significance in negotiations regarding all weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional weapons that have residual effects.



Continuity

Negotiations should build on past agreements and should be directed toward future negotiations whenever feasible. Innovative thinking and new approaches should, however, be encouraged when appropriate.

Further Guidelines

League support of arms control measures includes actions on proposals, negotiations, and agreements.

The League supports efforts to achieve quantitative limits or reductions that focus on nuclear warheads, non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction, missiles and other delivery systems, antiballistic missiles, conventional weapons, or troop levels.

The League advocates limits on the spread or proliferation of weapons, nuclear technology, and fissile materials. The League opposes the proliferation of weapons, nuclear technology, and fissile materials to non-state actors or to commonly held areas such as the seabed or outer space. The League supports establishing effective international monitoring, accounting, and control of such transfers.

The League's pursuit of bans on the possession or use of weapons may apply to existing weapons or those not yet developed.

The League seeks to reduce tensions through better means of communication, exchange of information, or prior notification of military tests and maneuvers in order to avoid the risks of miscalculation or accident. Other League-supported measures to reduce tensions and create a climate of trust among nations include scientific and cultural exchanges, conflict resolution training, and strengthening the United Nations and its supporting agencies. Efforts are encouraged to mediate regional issues and arrive at negotiated settlements to minimize arms build-ups and avoid conflicts. The United States should keep lines of communication open.

The League supports efforts to inhibit the development and improvement of weapons through qualitative limits, including limits on testing of weapons. These constraints may be selective or comprehensive in their application.

Efforts to improve the arms control regime of international laws, oversight bodies, and verification modalities are also supported, and US engagement and leadership in this regard is encouraged. The League supports diligence by the United States in meeting the terms of ratified arms control agreements and in reviewing their effectiveness over time.

League History

The League's 1982 – 1984 national security study was intended to add focus and direction to existing support for “efforts to reduce the risk of war, including negotiations on disarmament and arms control” under the UN position. Once the 1983 position was reached, League action in support of arms control measures was immediate and effective, particularly on the issues of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) – a missile defense plan that undermines the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty – and anti-satellite weapons. The League has continued to play a key role in legislative efforts to limit funding for unworkable and destabilizing missile defense systems and to uphold the traditional interpretation of the ABM Treaty.

Other arms control measures supported by the League included negotiation of a bilateral, mutually verifiable freeze on the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons to be followed by reductions; a comprehensive test ban treaty; and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In 1988, the League was successful in lobbying for Senate ratification of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), an unprecedented agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate an entire class of nuclear weapons. In October 1991, the League urged the Senate to ratify the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

The League lobbied for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) from 1997 until October 1999, when Senate arms control opponents brought the treaty up without full hearings and the Senate rejected the resolution of ratification.

In 2000, the League again worked in support of the ABM Treaty and in opposition to deployment of a planned national missile defense (NMD) system.

After extensive review by a Board-appointed task force, the League's position was updated at Convention 2010 by concurrence of League delegates. In 2010, LWVUS successfully lobbied for the new START Treaty between the United States and Russia. In 2011, the Treaty, which includes new verification requirements for deployed strategic warheads as well as delivery vehicles, was ratified and signed by President Obama.

MILITARY POLICY AND DEFENSE SPENDING

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Military Policy and Defense Spending, as Announced by national board, April 1984 and Revised, April 1986:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the US government should seek to protect its interests at home and abroad through the use of nonmilitary measures, including diplomacy, mediation, and multilateral cooperation. These measures reflect the importance that the League attaches to US efforts to strengthen international organizations, reduce tensions among nations, and minimize the risk of conflict worldwide.

The League believes that military force should be viewed as a tool of last resort. Unquestionably, defense of the homeland is an appropriate military objective. In this context, conventional weapons are clearly preferable to nuclear weapons. Any decision to defend another nation militarily should be in support of clear foreign policy goals and tailored to specific circumstances. Military assistance and the direct military involvement of US forces are not appropriate means to further the League's stated paramount interests in developing countries.

The League believes that nuclear weapons should serve only a limited and specific function – that of deterring nuclear attack on the United States – until such time as these weapons are eliminated through arms control and disarmament agreements. The goal of US military policy, however, should be to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used.



Nuclear Deterrence

The League believes that the United States should vigorously pursue arms control negotiations in order to ensure that all nations reduce and eventually eliminate their stockpiles of strategic nuclear weapons. The League does not support unilateral elimination of any leg of the strategic nuclear triad of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and long-range bombers. However, the League does not support any modernization of the land leg that would result in weapons systems that are vulnerable or increase incentives to attack first.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

The League believes that the defense of NATO allies should continue to be a shared responsibility. The League supports the United States' commitment to defend NATO allies with conventional forces. The League urges continued efforts to negotiate mutual and balanced reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

The League believes there is no appropriate role for US nuclear weapons in the defense of NATO allies. The League strongly opposes the policy of threatening to introduce nuclear weapons into a conventional conflict in Europe, a policy commonly referred to as "first use." Consistent with these views, the League opposes the deployment of US nuclear weapons on European soil.

Other Commitments

The League supports the US commitment to defend Japan with conventional forces. Conventional forces are also appropriate for defending other allies. The League rejects any nuclear role in defending Japan and other allies, in protecting access to vital resources, or in responding to military conflicts around the world.

Defense Spending

The League believes that defense spending should be examined in the same way as spending for other national needs. Within any given level of defense funding, the United States should move toward emphasizing readiness over investment. Preference should be given to operations and maintenance expenditures and military pay as opposed to research and development, procurement of new weapons, and construction of military facilities. The League believes that savings in the defense budget can be achieved through increased efficiency and improved accountability.

In summary, the League believes that national security has many dimensions and cannot be limited to military policy alone. It can be defined as ensuring domestic tranquility, providing for the common defense, and promoting the general welfare. Key elements include the country's ability to implement social and environmental programs and to maintain cooperative relationships with other nations. Other important components are effective political leadership and a strong economy. Therefore, in decisions about the federal budget, political leaders should assess the impact of US military spending on the nation's economy and on the government's ability to meet social and environmental needs.

League History

The second part of the League's 1982 – 1984 national security study focused on military policy objectives and defense spending, including spending priorities and links between defense and domestic spending in the federal budget. League members first evaluated US military missions, then scrutinized military forces and defense budget



priorities. This comprehensive approach stemmed from the principle that weapons systems should reflect a nation's military policy, which in turn should be developed from basic military purposes or missions. The resulting April 1984 statement related military policy and defense spending.

League action focused on congressional efforts to limit deployment of the MX missile and oppose funding for a rail garrison basing system. The League also strongly opposed funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative. Since the mid-1980s the League has called on Congress and the President to focus on defense spending when making budget cuts for deficit reduction.

As a result of the 1984 – 1986 study of US relations with developing countries, the Military Policy and Defense Spending position was revised to emphasize that “Military assistance and the direct military involvement of US forces are not appropriate means to further the League’s stated paramount interests in developing countries.”