



League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

POSITION STATEMENTS

(Adopted April 17, 2010)

Mental Health Services in Dona Ana County (2010). The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports an adequately funded mental health care system that provides comprehensive services to the acutely, chronically and seriously mentally ill of all ages; maintains optimal mental health services for all clients; offers mental health services for the homeless; seeks additional funds for preventive services; implements a master plan to integrate services; raises awareness of critical unmet needs; and emphasizes case management.

Solid Waste Recycling (1999, revised 2008). The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports a program of collecting items suitable for cost-effective recycling. It is important to seek new markets for recycling items, make recycling more accessible, find methods of cost-effective collecting and promote more compensated recycling. The League encourages city and county governmental cooperation toward all-inclusive trash disposal, and more readily accessible recycling for all county residents. Public education should be encouraged to keep citizens informed about all aspects of the program, to promote the purchasing of recycled products in minimal packaging, and to increase participation in the recycling program.

Metropolitan Court (2007) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that a Metropolitan Court system best serves the requirements of due process and fair trials for the residents of Doña Ana County. Because of the geographic size of the county, the League supports a system that includes satellite courts in outlying areas.

Branigan Library (1986, 1996 and 2007) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that a public library is a major community resource. Growth in our city and county has outpaced the current library resources. The Library continues to lag behind established standards for public libraries. It is essential that the following actions be taken:

- that the main library facility be expanded in order to enlarge the collection and provide adequate space for staff and program.
- that branch libraries be established to improve geographic access to library services. Possible collaboration with other community entities such as schools, recreation centers or senior centers should be encouraged.
- that the County Government be encouraged to provide more financial support to reflect the widespread use of the library throughout the County.

County Government (1977, amended 1997) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports the following measures to improve the efficiency and services offered to citizens of Doña Ana County by its county government:

1. development of a comprehensive plan for Doña Ana County that will contain long-range goals and objectives for the county and serve as a guide toward managing expected growth; features of this plan should include provision for orderly development while preserving existing resources;
2. the principle of continued cooperation between the City of Las Cruces and the County of Doña Ana through sharing of facilities and personnel wherever feasible; suggested areas of cooperation include computer time, public library services, Memorial Medical Center,

planning, purchasing, detention facilities, police/sheriff personnel and training of personnel.

3. the principle that residents of the City of Las Cruces should recognize their responsibilities toward county government by participating actively in its processes and that county officials in turn act as representatives of all the county's residents.

Election Procedures (1992, amended 1994, 1997, and 2003) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports:

- implementation of mail ballot elections locally whenever an election meets the requirements in order to reduce costs and increase responses.
- cooperation and coordination among city, county, and school district officials to consolidate and establish polling places so each individual has a single, permanent voting place.
- implementation of split shifts for election-day workers to help alleviate the shortage of poll workers.
- clarification and simplification of options for early and absentee voting procedures. Election officials should send clear notice to the public of the dates each begins and ends and increase publicity of voter options for polling places.
- increased efforts to inform voters of the importance of voting and special campaigns in election years to get out the vote.

Health Care in Dona Ana County (March, 1976, amended 1999, 2003, 2005) Adequate health care for all citizens improves the general welfare of our county and ensures the well being of individual residents. The goal is to decrease the number of those without or with inadequate health care insurance in the County. To achieve this objective the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports measures that would improve both access to and adequate funds for primary health care for the residents of Doña Ana County.

To ensure that adequate health care can be provided, the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports efforts to increase the number of health care personnel, improved publicity of existing health care services, guaranteed health care for children, improved health education for the public, increased availability of rural health clinics; provision of public transport of the elderly to public facilities and availability of a prenatal clinic for those with low incomes.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that there should be a meaningful mechanism for public oversight of use of public monies by both hospitals. It is the responsibility of the city and the county to ensure that the terms of the lease between the city, county and administration of Memorial Medical Center that provide access to health care at that institution for indigent are met and that the monies from the trust fund set up by the lease are expended only for health care.

Land Use Planning (1974, amended 1984, 1996, 1997, 2000, and 2001) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that land use decision making must start with a comprehensive plan that clearly reflects what the citizens have expressed as important goals and desired outcomes for their community. Because our region is encompassed by several separate planning entities (Doña Ana County, City of Las Cruces, La Mesilla and Extra-Territorial Zone) coordination among all of them is essential to ensure regional coherence. In order to facilitate this coordination, comprehensive plans, including future land use plans as necessary, should be specific enough to stand alone separate from detailed zoning regulations and give direction to all planning and zoning commissioners, board of adjustment and other planning decision makers.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces also believes that a comprehensive land use plan must include a clear delineation of responsibilities and authority for execution of the plan. Planning decision makers such as planning and zoning commissioners, city councilors, the Extra-Territorial Authority, the county commissioners and the City Board of Adjustment

should be held accountable for their decisions and be ready to show the rationale for their votes.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports preservation of agricultural land and open spaces within Doña Ana County. Because water quantity and quality are global concerns of particular urgency in our arid region, the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces strongly supports protection of water supplies in every phase of planning. Further, we support preservation of all the natural resources we enjoy: air quality, scenic views, night skies, green areas and natural habitats ranging from river valley to desert mesas, arroyos and the surrounding mountains.

The public should be encouraged to participate in the planning process at all levels wherever feasible. In addition, the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that the planning process must include accurate identification of long range and indirect costs to taxpayers that can be shared with and understood by the public prior to approval.

Municipal Elections (1993, amended 1997) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces believes that

1. if no candidate receives at least 50 percent of the vote, a run-off election will be held between the top two vote-getters within 28 days of the election date; and
2. nominating petitions for the offices of Mayor and Councilor should contain the signatures of at least two percent of the number of qualified electors eligible to vote for that office.

Water (1996, amended 1997 and 2001) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports policies that maintain the viability of ground and surface water supply in the region of the Mesilla Bolson. We recognize the need for urgency of action to protect and conserve our useable water supply. While recognizing the imperative of equitable resolution among competing water users, we urge expeditious conclusion to the ongoing adjudication and supply inventory processes.

We support communication among the various government agencies, as well as Elephant Butte Irrigation District, leading to clear definitions of responsibilities of each entity for managing water resources. While recognizing the continuous need to update data and technology, we urge prompt implementation of plans to utilize the substantial information already available.

We support water conservation regulations with realistic penalties for non-compliance, coupled with a progressive water-use fee schedule, and continuing public education on the need to make water choices.

Education (1998, amended 1999) The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports a system of public education. This system should establish as important goals for all students the development of the nature of democracy and citizen responsibilities, the ability to think critically, and the acquisition of skills necessary to continue to learn and to function as adults in a complex society.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports the participation of parents in the education process. Involvement of individual parents and groups of parents in their children's education and in the school system should be actively and consistently encouraged by the school district. This encouragement should include outreach to those parents who may have limited experience interacting with the schools.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces supports a school system structured so students with equivalent needs have equal access to services. Efforts should be made to ensure that access does not vary with respect to factors such as the age and geographic location of the facility. The League believes that the federal government should provide to the states either complete funding or substantial funding for all federal mandates in the area of special education.