

Immigration

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Immigration, as announced by the National Board, April 2008:

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the United States.

To complement these goals the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

The League supports federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

Criteria for Legal Admission to the United States

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- Family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens;
- Flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries;
- Economic, business, and employment needs in the United States;
- Education and training needs of the United States;
- Educational program opportunities; and
- Lack of a history of serious criminal activity.

Administration and Enforcement

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal, and right to humane treatment.

The League supports:

- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status;
- Verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers;
- Significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers;
- Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies;

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- More effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States; and
- Increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the United States to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

Unauthorized Immigrants Already in the United States

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics, and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity.

League History

The 2006 Convention voted to undertake a study on immigration. After study and consensus, the new position was finalized in 2008 and sent to Members of Congress.

In the 111th Congress (2009-2011), the League lobbied in support of the *DREAM Act* (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) that would provide a path to citizenship for young immigrants who complete a college degree or serve in the military, thereby enabling them to be a fully productive part of American society. The legislation passed the House but lacked enough votes to overcome a filibuster in the Senate.

Because of a request made in 2016, the League clarified part of its position on immigration “to mean that simple illegal re-entry is not considered a ‘serious crime’ for League advocacy purposes.”

In the 115th Congress (2017-2019), the League opposed the rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy by the Trump Administration. In response, the League again advocated for passage of a clean *DREAM Act* in Congress. The LWVUS Lobby Corps lobbied both the House and the Senate on this issue.

The League also opposed the *Securing America's Future Act of 2018*, which would have put immigrant youth at risk of deportation while supporting actions at our borders to separate children from their families at the border and funding a wall at our southern border. During the 2018 Convention in Chicago, IL, League members marched in support of immigrants and families while protesting this and other pieces of related legislation.

The League also opposed the Trump Administrations “Public Charge Rule,” which directed immigration officials to limit the entrance of immigrants who they deemed would become: more dependent on government funding” to meet their basic human needs.