



League of Women Voters of Tennessee: 2010 Priority Issues

LWVTN Goal for the 2010 Legislative Session: Maintain as much capacity as possible to meet the basic human needs of vulnerable populations, including children and persons with mental and physical health needs.

BUDGET: Maintain the integrity of community based services for child welfare, education, health, human services, juvenile justice, and mental health.

Proposed budget reductions would seriously erode the foundation of public-private and state-local partnerships established over the last 20 years and undermine essential services in our child welfare, education, health, human services, juvenile justice, mental health, and disability services systems. These services are interrelated; reducing resources for one system threatens the viability of all systems. Further cuts in funding for TennCare services would be especially damaging to public hospitals and smaller private hospitals in rural areas, and would exacerbate chronic underfunding of behavioral health services. Other programs that support children, families, and adults with mental illness will also be in jeopardy if additional revenues are not identified to reduce proposed cuts.

To preserve these essential human services, we support the following measures:

- **Annual (Hospital Fee) Coverage Assessment Act** (HB3310/ SB3528) – restores \$659 million (state and federal dollars) in proposed cuts to the TennCare program in FY 2011.
- **Use of reserve funds to cover additional tax shortfalls and avoid further program cuts.**
- **Food and Business Tax Fairness Act** (HB1350/ SB0502) – closes corporate tax loopholes and reduces the sales tax on food.
- **Internet Parity Act** (HB1947/ SB1741) – requires online vendors to collect Tennessee sales tax if they pay in-state affiliates to solicit business.
- **Tax modernization** is urgently needed to address chronic revenue shortfalls over the long term. The League supports a balanced system of taxation that considers the ability of the taxpayer to pay and produces sufficient revenues to fund essential services. Several bills would accomplish this: The **Tax Modernization and Economic Stimulus Act** (HB2182/ SB2054) and two versions of the **Tax Cut and Job Creation Act** (HB3597/ SB3235; HB3596/ SB3236).

PRE-K: Maintain current funding level for state-funded, voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs – 934 pre-K classrooms serving 18,000 4-year-olds in Tennessee.

ENVIRONMENT: Restore dedicated funds for land preservation; prohibit mountaintop removal; maintain clean water enforcement; and support smart growth legislation.

- **Restore four TN Real Estate Transfer Funds for land acquisition and protection.**
- **Support Water Quality Control Act** (HB0455/ SB1398) – restrict mountain top removal coal mining and construction or use of any new outlet for discharge of wastes into waters of the state.

ELECTIONS: Oppose requiring photo IDs and proof of citizenship to vote; support timely implementation of the Tennessee Voter Confidence Act, including the following bills:

- **Report on use of HAVA funds** (HB3724/ SB3894) – requires secretary of state to provide an annual report to the general assembly on the use of federal Help America Vote funds.
- **Funding for implementation of TN Voter Confidence Act** (HB3692/ SB3334) – requires the state (not counties) to be responsible for all expenses related to implementation of the Act (e.g., printing, storing paper ballots).
- **Purging Voter Registrations (HB3456, SB 3392)** – Prohibits purging due to deficient registration form once voter has officially registered, unless voter deliberately placed false information.

OPEN GOVERNMENT: Support access to public records, open meetings of public officials, and general government transparency.