NATURAL RESOURCES: Water

Positions: Water

LWVO supports policies and procedures that provide for:

1. Joint, cooperative planning and administration along watershed lines and across political boundaries. (Adopted 1961)
2. Stringent water quality standards accompanied by strong enforcement and means of implementation.
3. Adequate state financing, including incentives to local governments and industries for expediting water pollution abatement. (Adopted 1967)

Background: Water

The LWVO has covered the waterfront—from septic tanks and flood plains to lake drilling, megafarms, and scenic rivers.

1955: LWVO studied Ohio Department of Natural Resources (then six years old).

1956: LWVUS four-year study of federal water management. Consensus reached in 1958 and 1960.

1960: LWVO one-year study of Ohio's water development and management problems.

1965: LWVO Convention adopted not-recommended two-year study of water pollution control policies, programs, and laws. Consensus announced in 1967.

1967: LWVUS announced consensus on financial incentives to industry to abate water pollution.

2005: LWVO Convention adopted a resolution requesting that the General Assembly support a moratorium on new permits for megafarms in Ohio.

For the last 20 years the League has monitored the Great Lakes Governors and Premiers in their development of a set of principles included in the Great Lakes Charter to guide them in developing, maintaining, and strengthening the regional management regime for the waters of the Great Lakes Basin. The "lake area" Leagues have closely followed Annex 2001, an amendment to the Great Lakes Charter of 1985, developed to update the Great Lakes regional water management system and ensure that the Great Lakes are protected, conserved, restored and improved for future generations. League members have continued to voice on-going concerns regarding the damage to the Great Lake Basin from pollution, environmental disruptions, and unsustainable water resource management that may individually and cumulatively alter the hydrology of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The League also has closely monitored legislation that could directly and indirectly affect the health of Ohio's vast number of streams, rivers, and lakes. In 2008, the Ohio legislature approved The Great Lakes Compact, an agreement between eight states and two Canadian provinces that would prevent future diversions of Great Lakes water out of the Great Lakes basin. Congress also approved the Compact. In a compromise to gain passage of the Great Lakes Compact in Ohio, the legislature also placed a constitutional amendment on the ballot that claimed to assure that private property owners retained their rights. The League opposed the proposed amendment because it did not rise to the level of belonging in the Ohio Constitution. The amendment passed.

In July of 2011 Governor Kasich vetoed HB 231 relating to Ohio's withdrawal of water from Lake Erie, stating that the bill lacked clear standards for conservation and withdrawals.

Outlook: Water

Water quality has improved from Lake Erie to the Ohio River, but problems of both surface water and groundwater quality and management continue. As population shifts make unbearable demands on the arid southwestern U.S., water may be recognized as essential for Ohio's people and economy—agriculture, industry, and tourism. However, agriculture and the megafarms, industry and deregulation, and tourism and increasing

population will be issues that will need continuous monitoring of state offices and legislation that affect water. This increased awareness of water as one of Ohio's greatest resources will call for strong protection and management efforts, including conservation and education. The League will continue its support of the Great Lakes Water Quality Initiative, Annex 2001, and the Great Lakes Compact. It will continue in its efforts to strengthen protection of the waters of the Great Lakes and its basin, including guarding against drilling in Lake Erie, and maintaining and improving water quality in lakes and streams.