

## Short Summary of Advocacy at This Point

### A. Education Policy Update - Public Education Is Taking a Beating

#### 1. Governor DeWine ordered a \$300 million cut in K-12 Foundation Aid to School Districts

The cuts are designed to balance the state budget for this fiscal year that ends June 30. Every district will lose funds.

#### 2. EdChoice Vouchers to continue in 140 Districts in 2020-21 school year

Without further action, the explosion will take place on February 1, 2021, when the voucher applications for the next school year begins again. The state decides where vouchers are available, but it requires local school districts to pay for them. A very simple way the legislature can protect local resources for public education during this financial crisis is to halt new EdChoice vouchers. Reps. Patterson and Robinson introduced HB 587 that would suspend vouchers for 20-21 school year. It has not had a hearing.

#### 3. The Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding announced a legal challenge to EdChoice Vouchers

On May 14 Bill Phillis, director of the coalition that filed the *DeRolph* school funding case in the mid 1990's that found the system unconstitutional announced that he is working with local school districts to challenge the legality of Edchoice vouchers.

#### 4. Ohio Supreme Court ruled on the challenge to the provisions in HB70 that created Academic Distress Commissions to govern schools where state report cards defined performance as unacceptable.

### What lies ahead? What do we do?

Funding of public education will be in jeopardy from the existing financial crisis facing our families, state, and nation, and from the deduction method of funding vouchers and charter schools. Funding, vouchers, and federal aid will all vary by school district.

Our most important job is to continue to advocate for the importance of public education in a democracy, and to urge that stabilizing opportunities in our public system must be our priority in policy making – not advancing private education at public cost.

### B. Gun Control

By far, the biggest task I have had for the 133rd Ohio General Assembly has been to monitor and evaluate the numerous gun bills introduced into the Ohio General Assembly. There have been approximately 25 bills that LWVO could have supported under our position statements and 12 that we could have opposed. Assessing the viability of these bills has been very time consuming. **Unfortunately, there have been only two or three viable bills this**

**session. The first was HB 178. On May 22, 2019, I presented in-person LWVO Testimony opposing HB 178, Permit-less carry of a Concealed Weapon which moved out of committee but did not go for a floor vote.**

The other two that currently deserve our attention are SB 381, a “Stand Your Ground” bill and SB 317 that identifies the level of active shooter training for school staff who have been authorized by their school boards to carry guns into a school.

**Currently, the most active and threatening gun bill is the very dangerous, Stand-Your-Ground (SYG) legislation, HB 381.** This bill lifts the duty to retreat when someone feels threatened, justifying the use of lethal force. We also have studies showing that a white person who “stands their ground” and kills a black person in self defense, will more likely be exonerated by our criminal justice system than a black person who kills a white person.

### **C. Social Policy**

**Human trafficking:** submitted written testimony supporting SB 13, the Protect Trafficked Minors Act, to House Criminal Justice Committee on Feb. 13, 2020. This bill passed the Senate unanimously but is stuck in the House; action may be expected in the lame duck session. I have submitted testimony in support of similar bills in past sessions, based on our state position.

**Housing:** Activity in this area generally involves supporting the Housing Trust Fund during budget negotiations; however, in this session the trust fund was treated fairly and League support was not needed. League was recently asked by COHHIO to support a request that the state use stimulus funds to provide emergency rental assistance to avoid evictions, but chose not to do so in view of other priorities and limited LWVO staff. (I would disagree and believe that avoiding evictions is key to family stability. I have a bias toward housing and would generally support a COHHIO request, having served as the League representative on the COHHIO board for 15 years.) Housing activity is based on national positions, as Ohio does not have a state housing position.

**Reproductive rights:** I wrote testimony opposing the Heartbeat bill, SB 23, for a February 26, 2019 hearing, although the testimony was given in person by another Leaguer. We can expect more bills to erode reproductive rights unless the composition of the legislature changes.

**Capital Punishment:** The Ohio House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a bill that would ban the death penalty for offenders who were seriously mentally ill at the time of the offense. HB136 passed the House by a vote of 76-17 on June 5, 2019 with bipartisan support and was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee on June 11 where it has stayed going into the 2020 Lame Duck Session.

Governor Mike DeWine issued reprieves to the last three Ohio death-row prisoners facing executions dates in 2020, ensuring that the state will not carry out any executions this year. The reprieves were granted “due to ongoing problems involving the willingness of pharmaceutical suppliers to provide drugs to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and

Correction (DRC), pursuant to DRC protocol, without endangering other Ohioans.” DeWine has issued reprieves of 11 executions scheduled in 2020. Former Governor John Kasich previously issued reprieves of three other execution dates that had been scheduled for 2020. There are more legislators moving toward abolition of the death penalty.

#### **D.Natural Resources**

**Energy:** After much bitter contention during 2019 the legislature passed, and the Governor signed, HB6 (the First Energy nuclear bail out). This was followed by a failed repeal-petition drive. As a result all Ohioans will have increased electric bills starting January 1. The recent arrests have revived interest in repealing HB6 and repeal. Of concern, there are parts of the bill supporting renewables.

HB246 is mostly concerned with reorganizing the state's energy regulatory structure, However, it does contain language allowing property owners to install solar panels, even if forbidden by homeowner associations. I plan to submit written testimony *in* favor of this section and declare us an interested party on the remainder.

HB401 and SB234 add a local referendum to the process of approval of a wind farm. I have testified against this bill because it is added bureaucracy intended to additionally inhibit wind energy. Various obstacles, passed by the legislature, have made Ohio the 49th in the nation in renewable energy. I have testified in opposition to SB234 and will submit written opposition to HB401, if it is heard.

SB257 is bi-partisan legislation granting a tax credit to electric vehicles. Although efforts in greenhouse-gas reduction have concentrated on electric generation, transportation is now a larger source.