

LWV-TN Health Care Position January, 2008

POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Tennessee believes that affordable access to healthcare should be available to all Tennessee residents. The League supports health care which covers disease prevention, health promotion and education, primary care, behavioral health care, acute care, and long term care. Tennessee health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services; efficient and economical delivery of appropriate health care; and a reasonable total state expenditure level for health care. Until the goal of a national health insurance plan is reached, responsibility (including, but not limited to, fiscal responsibility) for health care starts with individuals and families; extends to educators, medical and assistive care providers; and should be shared by local, state and federal governments and medical insurance carriers including managed care entities.

Prevention and Education: LWVTN supports a strong emphasis on preventive healthcare and widespread health education efforts as the most cost-effective way to serve all Tennesseans. Preventive care includes:

- Disease prevention and immunizations;
- Health and wellness promotion and education through schools and the media;
- Age appropriate physical education and family life education including education on reproductive health and disease prevention;
- Family planning and disease prevention services; and
- Support for WIC, school lunch programs and other targeted outreach programs.

Primary and Acute Health Care: LWVTN supports the availability of affordable care including:

- Primary and acute health care, including the most cost-effective prescription drug treatment for illness and injury;
- Reproductive, maternal and child health care;
- Behavioral health care including mental health services and services to promote recovery from substance use disorders; and
- Treatment and management of chronic diseases or conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, serious mental illness and developmental disabilities.

Long Term Care: LWVTN supports long term care accessible to all in home- and community-based settings. Long term care includes:

- Medical care and supportive services for individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities;
- Custodial and non-skilled help, such as assistance with activities of daily living, as well as services provided by licensed professionals; and
- Provision of care in homes, adult day care, hospitals, nursing homes, long term care facilities, or other supportive housing.

LWVTN supports the availability of hospice (including palliative) care for all who need it. If an individual, in consultation with his or her physician and family members,

chooses to enter a hospice program, that program should be covered by current insurance programs and ultimately funded by a national health insurance program.

Covering Those Who Are Uninsured: LWVTN supports programs aimed at decreasing the number of individuals lacking health insurance, including:

- Expansion of Tennessee's Medicaid eligibility;
- Development of group insurance pools for employers with few employees and for the self-employed;
- Portability of commercial insurance for those who have changed or lost jobs;
- Implementation of an affordable insurance plan for individuals with catastrophic illnesses; and
- Establishment of a fair system of reimbursement of health services for people who are medically indigent.

These programs should continue and grow until a national health care system is implemented.