

LWV-CA Criminal Justice Reform Position

POSITION IN BRIEF:

LWV-California supports:

- a criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry;
- the elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities;
- policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve;
- collaboration between government and community-based programs throughout every stage of the criminal justice system;
- a focus on humane treatment and rehabilitation with the goal of promoting the successful re-entry into California communities of those who have been incarcerated; and
- reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies.

POSITIONS - Support for the following measures and principles:

Policing Practices

- crime prevention and promotion of public safety as the primary roles of state and local law enforcement agencies. [LWV-Los Angeles City]
- police engagement with community members as critical for building public trust and positive community relationships. [LWVs of San Francisco, Los Angeles City, and Seattle/King County WA]
- community participation in the development of policing policy. [California SB 1421 Peace Officers: Release of Records; LWV-US Citizen's Right to Know position; LWV-CA Open Government position; LWVs of San Francisco, Los Angeles City, Roseville Area MN, & Seattle/King Co. WA]
- police accountability via independent citizen oversight of law enforcement and publicly available data on officer conduct. [California SB 1421 Peace Officers: Release of Records; LWV-US Citizen's Right to Know position; LWV-CA Open Government position; LWVs of San Francisco, Los Angeles City, Roseville Area MN, & Seattle/King Co. WA]
- dissemination of information to the public about policing policies, recruitment, procedures for complaint/commendation, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens and officers in interactions with each other. [LWVs of Seattle/King County WA and Long Beach CA]
- the provision of sufficient psychological services and counseling to meet stress-related needs of police personnel. [LWV-Long Beach]
- staffing of police departments that reflects the diversity of the communities they serve, and recruitment efforts that reflect this principle. [LWV-US]
- training all officers to identify individuals with mental health or substance abuse addiction conditions, to request support from mental health professionals, and to divert those individuals into treatment instead of jail. [Brennan Center for Justice]
- requiring all officers to render first aid to people who have been injured as a result of police action. [LAPD Inspector General's Review of Best Practices.]

- in-depth, comprehensive psychological and background checks for all applicants to law enforcement positions. [LWV-Long Beach]
- the ability of undocumented individuals to report crimes without fear of prosecution. [LWV-US Immigration position & CA SB 54]
- departments 1) establishing de-escalation policies that recognize the value of preserving human life, 2) holding officers accountable for out-of-policy behavior, and 3) training officers on implicit bias and how it may affect decisions to use force. [LWVs of San Francisco, Los Angeles City, Roseville MN, and Seattle/King Co. WA; Peel's Principles of Policing 1829; LAPD Office of Inspector General Reports on Use of Force; President's Task Force on 21st Century; War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Police, ACLU]

Pre-trial Procedures

- prosecutors, defense attorneys, court counselors and judges receiving regular training on alternatives to incarceration, including pre-trial diversions and restorative justice practices. [LWVs of IA, PA, VA]
- treating mental health conditions and substance abuse addictions as public health issues, not crimes. [LWVs of AR, ID, IA, IL, KS, LA, MA, OR, NY, PA, RI, SC, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, and DC]
- the employment of specialty courts. [LWVs of AR, ID, IA, IL, KS, LA, MA, OR, NY, PA, RI, SC, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, and DC]
- consideration of community-based treatment programs and other alternatives to incarceration when appropriate. [LWVs of AR, ID, IA, IL, KS, LA, MA, OR, NY, PA, RI, SC, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, and DC]

Sentencing

- sentencing which takes into consideration the circumstances of the individual charged and nature of the crime. [LWV-IL and US Sentencing and Policing position]
- consideration of split sentencing and/or alternatives to incarceration when appropriate. [LWVs of CO, DE, LA, MA, MT, NE, WA, and Los Angeles County]

Incarceration

- all correctional systems providing humane, dignified, non-discriminatory treatment of inmates and personnel, including appropriate healthcare and access to community-based rehabilitation programs. [LWVs of AR, DE, ID, IL, MA, MT, NY, PA, VA, RI, WI, No/Central San Mateo County and Los Angeles County]
- clear, safe and accessible ways for inmates and corrections officers to report abuse. [National Commission on Correctional Healthcare]
- recidivism programs such as those that focus on rehabilitation, education, substance abuse recovery, and transitional programs, which also help address the personal skills necessary for successful reentry into society. [LWVs of ID, PA, WI, and "The Psychological Impact of Incarceration"]
- case management services which match education, behavior, job training, work, and mental health programs to incarcerated individuals. [LWVs of DE, IA, IL, KS, LA, MA, NY, PA, RI, TX, VA, WA, WI, DC, and Los Angeles County]
- the provision of sufficient psychological services, including training and evaluation, to meet the needs of corrections officers. [LWV-PA]
- the encouragement of unencumbered family and community visitations and contact. [LWVs of FL, MI, NH]

- requiring private prisons in California and those holding California prisoners to comply with all of the standards for state-run jails and prisons. [LWV-US Privatization position]
- the elimination of private prisons. [LWVUS privatization position]

Re-entry

- collaboration with community-based organizations to facilitate reintegration of people released from prison. [LWVs of AR, DE, IL, LA, MA, MT, PA, TX, VA, SC, WI, and Los Angeles County; California AB 1008 Ban the Box; California Good Government Position]
- the availability of pre- and post-release programs, inclusive of probation services, to prepare as well as assess and address the needs of people re-entering California communities. [LWV-MI]

General

- law enforcement agencies standardizing data and setting up systems so that information can easily be shared. [LWV-ID, Measures for Justice]
- reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies. [LWVs of DC, ID, FL, IL, LA, and MN]