

LWVUS Position on Immigration

Subject: LWVUS President Mary Wilson's Letter to Sec. Napolitano

March 23, 2009

Secretary Janet Napolitano
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano,

We would like to congratulate you on your new position as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, and to thank you for your willingness to serve our nation in this important role. The experience and expertise you gained as Attorney General and then as Governor of Arizona make you an outstanding asset for the new administration. In addition, coming from a border state, you bring an important perspective to immigration issues in your department.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) adopted a comprehensive immigration position in 2008, the culmination of a two-year study process and consensus among League members throughout the United States. The League of Women Voters is made up of 850 local and state Leagues nationwide with more than 150,000 members and supporters.

Enclosed is a copy of the full immigration position approved by the national League of Women Voters Board in March 2008. In summary, our position says:

"The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the U.S. on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law."

We understand that your first concern as Secretary of DHS is enforcement of existing immigration laws. In that regard, the League supports improved technology to facilitate employer verification of immigration status; verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers; significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers; improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies; more effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States; and increased personnel at the borders. However, the League also supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal and right to humane treatment.

We believe that enforcement of immigration law will be most effective when provision is made for an efficient, expeditious system for legal entry of immigrants into the U.S. During the transition to such a comprehensive policy, the League supports a system to permit the unauthorized immigrants already in this country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics, and meeting other relevant criteria. We oppose deportations of current unauthorized immigrants who have no history of serious criminal activity.

We are confident that your tenure at the Department of Homeland Security will be marked by significant accomplishments and that the department's immigration policy will be characterized by respect for individual rights as well as the enforcement of national laws and objectives. Please let us know if the League of Women Voters of the United States can assist you in this important work.

Sincerely,

Mary G. Wilson
President, LWVUS