



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
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To: Pennsylvania General Assembly
From: Andrea Mulrine, President, League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
Date: September 15, 2008

As the 2006-07 session of the Pennsylvania Legislature draws to a close, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania urges you to address three issues before adjourning – redistricting reform, expansion of affordable health care insurance coverage to low income Pennsylvanians and energy savings legislation.

REDISTRICTING REFORM

While our effort to initiate the process for passing a constitutional amendment to reform redistricting in time to take effect in 2011 failed, it is still possible to enact legislation that will significantly improve the process. The League proposed legislation that will do the following:

- In addition to redistricting the seats in the PA legislature after each decennial census, the Legislative Reapportionment Commission constituted under the PA Constitution would also conduct redistricting of Pennsylvania's congressional districts after each decennial census.
- Set measurable parameters for the following criteria for drawing district boundaries: population equality; prohibitions on splitting political subdivisions unless absolutely necessary; districts must be contiguous and reasonably geographically compact.
- Set standards for transparency and public input.

The League intends to continue our efforts to pass a constitutional amendment to take effect in 2021 but in the meantime, for 2011, we believe this legislation will ensure partisan fairness for both congressional and legislative redistricting and put an end to the secrecy which has dominated the process in the past.

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

An estimated 767,000 Pennsylvania adults lack health care insurance coverage more than the population of five states. A majority of the uninsured have full time jobs. The number of employed uninsured is growing as employers drop coverage because of rising costs that exceed the inflation rate. The League believes that all Pennsylvanians, indeed all U.S. citizens are entitled to a basic level of quality health care. One way to achieve that goal is to create a system of health care insurance that provides universal access.

LWVPA believes the Pa Access to Basic Care plan which passed the House with bipartisan support and is now pending in the Senate, is an important step toward providing universal access. PaABC expands coverage

available to low income adults under adultBasic, helps small businesses provide health care to low-income workers and expands coverage to include prescriptions, behavioral health prevention and wellness and chronic disease management. Adults who do not qualify for government subsidies can buy into the program at a reasonable cost.

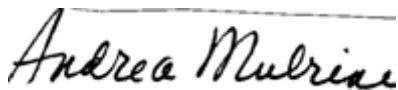
AdultBasic is currently funded by all state dollars. The House passed bill would authorize the Commonwealth to obtain a federal waiver on eligibility requirements for Medicaid funds so the federal government will pay 54 cents of every dollar spent on coverage, joining several other states that have already done so. This will allow us to cover many more uninsured with our limited state dollars.

An alternative proposal known as HealthNET contains many good ideas which should be implemented to improve health care quality and lower costs for all Pennsylvanians. But the foundation of the proposal, expansion of health care clinics and reliance on volunteer physician services, is not an adequate substitute for providing low income adults equality of access to health care choices most of us enjoy.

ENERGY SAVINGS LEGISLATION

With electric rate caps due to expire in 2011 the General Assembly is considering ways to soften the blow of increased electric costs on family budgets. HB2200, which has passed the House, would help reduce costs to individual and business consumers by providing financial incentives to reduce energy use. At the same time, Pennsylvania's contribution of approximately 1% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions would also be reduced. The bill would require installation of smart meters in every household and provide consumers the option operating high energy consuming appliances during off peak hours at lower cost. This would reduce peak demand and lessen the need for building more expensive generating and distribution capacity to meet this demand. The bill would also provide incentives to homeowners for making homes more energy efficient structurally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea Mulrine". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,". There is a horizontal line drawn above the signature.