

Grosse Pointe League of Women Voters Advocacy Positions

SOCIAL POLICY

Education
Housing
Human Services
Public Libraries

Education

(Adopted by the League of Women Voters Grosse Pointe, October 4, 2023.)

The League of Women Voters Grosse Pointe has a core focus on the freedom to vote and believes that ensuring high-quality public education for all individuals is essential to empowering voters and defending our democracy.

The Grosse Pointe Public Schools and the Harper Woods Public Schools are vital institutions in our communities. They are charged with ensuring that every student enrolled in the public schools receives a high-quality education that will prepare them for democratic citizenship and to be productive adults who contribute positively to society. Our public schools serve all children regardless of their gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, native language, or physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities.

These goals require the public schools to provide knowledge on many subjects and essential skills as well as to educate children on core American values such as fairness, equality, justice, respect for others, and the right to dissent.

LWVGP has the following positions on public education:

- A. Support the concept of community education.
- B. Support and encourage the public schools to
 1. provide appropriate class size for effective teaching
 2. provide an adequate school social worker program
 3. meet the needs of children with special requirements.
- C. Support Wayne County Community College.
- D. Support school libraries/access to resources.

The school library plays a unique role in helping a school district meet its goals. School libraries promote intellectual freedom and enable children to learn the critical thinking and problem-solving skills required to be successful and contributing adults in our society. An educated person needs the ability to discern diverse points of view, which means that our local schools must endeavor to build those skills through instruction.

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One of the foundations of a democratic society is the individual's right to read and the individual's right to freely choose what they would like to read (NCTE, 2018). The courts have recognized that minors have First Amendment rights, including the right to have access to information (Chmara, 2015). Local school districts should enact policies that ensure students have equal and equitable access to all library resources, in both the school-wide libraries and in classroom libraries. Parents should be able to restrict what their children read, both at home and at school. However, no parent has the right to restrict what another child should be allowed to read.

Each school should be staffed with at least one certified library media specialist, as recognized by the Michigan Department of Education (2023). Professional librarians and educators should be empowered to make informed, professional, and qualified resource decisions for our public schools. Library staff, operating within the standards of the American Library Association, should make professional decisions about selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of resources, services, and technologies without political interference. Working within the standards established by the state and the school district, teachers should be able to choose and recommend resources for their students, including building classroom libraries, without political interference.

Each school district should have a written and transparent process for identifying resources that will be available to children in the libraries and in their classrooms (see for example, GPPSS, p. 76). Each school district also should have a procedure for receiving concerns about resources that are made available to children in the libraries and in their classrooms (see for example, GPPSS, p. 74-75, 76-77). Teachers and administrators have the right to expect to be able to work without undue outside influence, but parents also have the right to share their concerns with educators about the resources provided to their children in school. Establishing a clear policy and following clear and fair practices is essential for ensuring that education professionals and the community trust in the decisions made by the school district.

Access to resources extends to electronic access because the school library is not limited to the physical space of the library. Through technology and online resources, the effective school library provides continuous access to resources, whether in the library, the classroom, the learner's home, or other remote locations (AASL 2018, 56-57).

Housing

(Housing Advocacy Position based on studies conducted by the former Detroit Metropolitan Area League of Women Voters (DMALWV). Adopted by LWVGP, May 3, 2014.)

Support of equal rights for all regardless of race or sex. Action to provide equal access to housing. Promotion of equal housing opportunity and encouragement of stability of integrated neighborhoods in the Detroit metropolitan area through implementation of

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open occupancy laws and promotion of an adequate supply of housing for lower income families.

Human Services

Support policies and programs staffed by sufficient well-trained personnel to provide preventive, protective and rehabilitative services to serve the needs of people of all ages.

Public Libraries

(Public Libraries Advocacy Position adopted by the League of Women Voters Grosse Pointe, May 17, 2023.)

The League of Women Voters Grosse Pointe believes that Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods Public Libraries are of central importance to our communities. Public libraries support our First Amendment right to intellectual freedom and expression by playing an important role in facilitating free and open access to information. Individuals should be trusted to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. Removing and banning books from public libraries is a slippery slope to government censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression.

Therefore, the League supports full service public library systems for the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods with the following characteristics:

Public libraries are responsive to the needs of the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods communities, relying on significant staff and community involvement in strategic planning, capital projects, collection selection, technological resources and space requirements.

Library staff, operating within the standards of the American Library Association, should make professional decisions about selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of resources, services and technologies without political interference.

Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods Public Libraries maintain an ongoing commitment to attracting and retaining quality staff.

Public library Boards of Trustees are selected in a manner that allows for community input and involvement, in an open and transparent process that makes Trustees accountable to their constituents. Each community served by the Library should be represented on the Library Board of Trustees.

Library Boards of Trustees maintain and make available, both online and in the libraries, any governance records that are of interest to the public. These records should include notices of Board meetings; meeting Agendas; meeting Minutes; current and past Budgets; operating policies; overviews of major project plans; and names, terms and

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qualifications of current Trustees.

Grosse Pointe and Harper Woods Public Libraries operate on sound fiscal plans. Operating budgets should be fully funded by tax dollars and not rely on private donations. Capital projects and special programs should be funded by a combination of tax dollars and private donations actively raised in the community with the assistance of organizations such as the Grosse Pointe Public Library Foundation, Friends of the Grosse Pointe Public Library and Friends of the Harper Woods Public Library.