



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CALIFORNIA

May 31, 2013

The Honorable Mark Leno  
The Honorable Bob Blumenfield  
Conference Committee on the Budget  
California State Legislature  
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814

## **Re: Local Control Funding Formula**

Dear Senator Leno and Assembly Member Blumenfield:

The League of Women Voters of California has long supported a less complex, more transparent system of public education funding—one that is adequate, flexible, equitable, reliable, and sustainable; one that is understandable to the public.

The League also believes that the state is responsible for the primary funding of public education, with provision for as much local control as possible over local schools.

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) shifts the majority of decision making primarily to local school boards, making them responsible for the distribution of funds and the implementation and evaluation of programs.

The League respectfully submits the following comments to the Conference Committee:

### **Constitution entitles every student to a free and appropriate public education**

We should not lose sight of the fact that the proposal is to restore funding to already low levels. The state has an obligation to provide adequate resources to assure all children have access to programs and services that will give them the opportunity to master state-approved standards. *The League agrees with our partners in the education community—the LCFF does not resolve the larger issue of chronic underfunding of schools.*

### **One-time use of funds**

The League agrees that it is prudent to use unexpected revenues for one-time purposes. Given the state's commitment to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the timeline CCSS implementation, with a focus on such fundamental needs as professional development, instructional materials, and technology enhancement.

### **Supplemental grant proposal**

The League agrees that there should be equitable distribution of general purpose funds, based on student population, with separate and appropriate funding for students with special needs such as Special Education, English Language Learners, foster children, and the socio-economically disadvantaged.

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Like foster children, **young people returning from incarceration in camps and juvenile detention facilities** have been wards of the state, a fact that increases the state's responsibility for not only their welfare, but also their education. As these youth are returned to their communities and their local schools, they have transitional needs—special needs, just as those currently included in the proposed supplemental grant. Too often they are not given the support they need, and they continue in their role as mere statistics. We can't afford to continue losing so many of our youth.

### **Exclusions from the LCFF**

The League agrees with maximizing flexibility to enable districts to meet local priorities and minimizing paperwork and compliance-driven thinking. To that end, we agree with the intent of the LCFF to limit the number of programs exempt from flexibility. At the same time, there are some programs that should be excluded and funded directly to assure their continued existence.

The state has adopted Common Core State Standards. A fundamental tenet is that all students should graduate college and/or career-ready. The League strongly supports that concept. Yet, the LCFF proposal as currently structured does not secure the CTE and ROC/P programs that serve unique student needs, are outside the core educational program provided by most districts, and are designed to help students be career-ready. We were pleased to see the proposal in the May Revise that essentially would give a two-year window of time that will allow for a more thorough vetting and consideration of issues related to ROC/Ps and CTE.

### **Transparency**

The League agrees with others in the education community that with decision-making moved to the local level, the LCFF must include information that is easily accessible to parents, educators, community members and the general public to allow for and encourage significant active engagement and oversight.

### **Accountability**

The League believes that any system of educational governance should provide both clear lines of authority and clearly defined methods of accountability. We are pleased that the May Revise moves in the direction of requiring school districts and school sites to clearly show how supplemental or concentration grant funds benefit each of the subgroups that generate that funding.

### **Implementation**

Adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula, regardless of version, is major reform in the way public schools in California are funded. Such reforms, by definition, take time to implement well. The Governor has called for a seven-year phase-in. During that time, there should be ongoing oversight, enforcement of accountability provisions, and

identification of areas needing adjustment, whether it be to improve, correct, or enhance.

The League agrees with the Senate proposal to delay the start of the transition by one year to allow for systematic local planning. It is essential that local districts be given time to engage their boards, staff, families, and other community members in planning. On the other hand, it is important that the momentum and enthusiasm for the plan not be lost by delaying any further. In addition, care should be taken to prevent domination of the discussion by special interests.

Without informed and active parent and community engagement, the LCFF will not achieve its goal of local decisionmaking that reflects priorities in more than 1000 school districts, while being held accountable to communities and the state.

**The need for ongoing robust discussions, oversight, tweaks**

The League of Women Voters of California looks forward to ongoing robust discussions, thoughtful decision making, and continuous evaluation and adjustment, as needed, to assure adopted reforms work well and live long. That will strengthen California's public school system and provide equitable access to a quality education that will offer all our students the opportunity to graduate from high school college and career-ready, a goal we all hold in common.

The League thanks the Governor and the Legislature for taking on this very large and complex topic.

Sincerely,



Jennifer A. Waggoner, President  
League of Women Voters of California

cc: Members of the Conference Committee on the Budget