**LWV Position on Marcellus Shale Natural Gas Extraction**

**Position in Brief**
Support the maximum protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of Marcellus Shale natural gas production, site restoration, and delivery to the customer by requiring the use of best practices and promoting comprehensive regulation, communication, and adequate staffing across government agencies.

Support the prevention of burdening the taxpayer with costs of industrialization and unanticipated consequences.

Support the 2006 Pennsylvania Property Rights Protection Act without amendment, the adoption of minimum spacing requirements for wells, and the pooling of properties between corporate entities to maximize efficiencies and reduce risk in the extraction process.

Support the maximum protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of Marcellus Shale natural gas transmission operations through improved siting, regulation, inspection, and enforcement that is transparent and responsive to stakeholder input.

**Background**
A state-wide study of Marcellus Shale natural gas extraction, including its ramifications for Pennsylvania’s water, air, infrastructure, agriculture, forests, tourism and economy, was adopted by the 2009 LWVPA Convention. Spearheaded by the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, the usual two-year study process was fast-tracked, and a position statement adopted by the LWVPA Board on May 1, 2010.

The resulting study guides, posted on the LWVPA website, provide needed information to citizens of Pennsylvania and other states about the extraction process and its impacts. In collaboration with other state Leagues, this position statement guided efforts that resulted in the unanimous adoption of a resolution in “Support of Safe Drilling and Mining for Energy Resources” at the 2010 national convention of LWVUS, held in Atlanta, Georgia.
The development of natural gas from Marcellus Shale has served as a catalyst for political, civic, economic, and environmental action in which the League has played a part. Working with coalition partners, the League served on the Citizen’s Marcellus Shale Commission. Based on hearings and testimony throughout the Commonwealth, a report was published along with recommendations for improved regulations.

Educational efforts expanded beyond the guides through the generosity of the Colcom Foundation. Funding from their grant enabled the League to provide a variety of venues throughout the western part of the Commonwealth to help educate the public regarding natural gas operations.

Delegates to the 2010 Southeastern PA Region ILO approved two additional, related studies on pipelines and pooling. In collaboration with the LWV of Indiana County, study guides were developed, consensus was held, and position statements adopted through concurrence by the delegates to the June, 2011 LWVPA Convention.

During the 2011 legislative session, over 200 bills were introduced regarding Marcellus Shale operations. In February 2012, HB 1950 was passed that revised the Oil and Gas Act and imposed an impact fee on drilling. It failed to incorporate a severance tax, included limited environmental safeguards, and provided provisions to pre-empt local zoning and municipal ordinances that hinder natural gas operations. Additional pieces of legislation are being considered as elected officials continue to weigh environmental issues with economic opportunities.

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Position in Detail
LWVPA recognizes that natural gas extracted from Marcellus Shale is a finite, carbon-based, energy resource and that its production significantly affects the environment and the economy of the Commonwealth. Under Natural Resources positions adopted by LWVUS, we believe government policies should promote an environment beneficial to life through the
protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest. Under the Fiscal Policy position adopted by LWVPA, we support an equitable and flexible revenue system for funding state and local government services. Finally, in concert with the Pennsylvania Constitution, Article 1, Section 27, we believe:

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.”

The League supports:
- the protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of Marcellus Shale natural gas production, site restoration, and delivery to the customer, by requiring the use of best practices, and promoting comprehensive regulation, communication, and adequate staffing across government agencies.
- encouragement of employment opportunities at the local level and economic development related to natural gas extraction that will result in new streams of revenue for state and local government agencies—but not at the expense of tourism related to natural recreation areas.
- a sufficient fee structure on natural gas extraction for permits, bonds, and surcharges for the funds to plug abandoned and orphan oil and gas wells that reflects projected costs, to prevent a burden on Pennsylvania taxpayers.
- creation of a severance tax on natural gas as a revenue source primarily designated for:
  - the monitoring and protection of public health;
  - the preservation and enhancement of natural resources;
  - an escrow fund for supporting community adjustment as the industry grows and declines; and
  - research on the effects of natural gas extraction from Marcellus Shale on the economy, environment, and public health of Pennsylvanians.
- legislation and regulation that provides for:
  - transparency in all stages of exploration, drilling, and production;
- insuring public input into decision-making regarding the location of facilities and related pipelines;
- extending the timelines and parameters for testing water supplies;
- balancing the rights of mineral and surface owners; and
- establishing an efficient and effective oversight system for reporting potential violations and accidents.

*Adopted May 1, 2010*