



The first three questions reflect the League of Women Voters of Iowa's policy priorities for the 2012 legislative session. The second set of questions are additional issues of interest, and are optional in your interviews with candidates (feel free to ask all or any one of these questions). Upon completion of your interview, we ask that you submit your answers electronically using our online interview response form at: www.surveymonkey.com/s/7PFGTM9.

Legislator (or Candidate) Name:

State Representative State Senator
 Candidate for State Representative Candidate for State Senator

LWVIA member filling this out (and the local league you represent):

TOP 2012 PRIORITY ISSUES

Iowa's mental health system is in serious crisis, leaving many Iowans without access to mental health services when they are needed. Without a strong and coordinated public mental health services safety net that emphasizes community-based care, more Iowans with mental illness end up in our prisons and jails, and in need of costly institutional care. The system has been under-resourced and without coordination for too long. At the same time, private insurers are scaling back on their coverage for mental health and substance abuse services, leaving Iowa taxpayers to pick up the cost for these services. Hundreds of interested parties came together this summer in six work groups to address the inconsistencies in the system, and make recommendations that would make sure there is a strong set of core services available throughout the state, and take steps to create a more equitable and stable funding system. The mental health system has been studied and studied, but because these studies consistently show the need for more resources, no action is ever taken. ***Given the (pending) recommendations of the Mental Health & Disability Services Redesign, how far are you willing to go, and what resources will you commit, to restructuring the state mental health system and preventing more costly care? How will you make sure the changes you make best serve the people that need them - and not just save money?***

League of Women Voters of Iowa
2012 Legislative & Candidate Forum Questions

Many sentencing reforms were adopted over the last two years following nearly a decade of study and with the support of the League of Women Voters of Iowa. Despite those changes, more than 70% of Iowa's prison population have a diagnosed substance use disorder, and more than 45% were diagnosed with a mental illness that requires ongoing psychiatric care. One in every three inmates met the criteria for being "seriously mentally ill." One of the work groups redesigning the state's mental health and disability services system was to look specifically at ways to reduce the number of jailed or imprisoned people with mental illness (and provide alternatives for those that find themselves in the criminal justice system). Jail diversion programs, crisis intervention services, and mental health courts have proven effective in other states, and in areas of Iowa that utilize them. ***How will you make sure best practices like mental health courts, crisis intervention, and jail diversion programs make their way to every corner of the state - and what more will you do to slow the growth of Iowa's prison population and address the needs of the growing number of substance abusers and persons with mental illness entering our correctional system?***

In 2011, the Iowa House of Representatives passed HF 561, which allowed the Iowa Utilities Board to consider nuclear power for additional energy generation. The bill passed with strong support in the House (68-30), but did not have sufficient votes in the Senate to move forward. The bill raised strong concerns among environmentalists about safe storage of nuclear waste, and among consumer advocates concerned rate increases could be large and uncapped, and would be assessed before a decision is even made on building a nuclear power plant. ***The League of Women Voters of Iowa opposes HF 561 because it does not protect Iowa utility customers from unfair rate increases and because there has been little discussion about making our current power plants more efficient. Would you oppose HF 561, and if not, what would you do to address concerns about safe disposal of waste and uncapped rate increases on consumers?***

OTHER OPTIONAL QUESTIONS (NOT TOP PRIORITIES):

CLEAN WATERWAYS/BOTTLE BILL

Budget cutbacks, recent flooding, and failure to implement significant environmental protections have left Iowa's waterways polluted. Our rivers and lakes are a major part of Iowa's quality of life, and more Iowans than ever are getting out to enjoy them. Failure to address Iowa's polluted waterways has a significant impact on Iowa's revenues from tourism, our quality of life, and our public health and safety. ***What will you do to clean up Iowa's waterways and expand Iowa's landmark bottle bill to include additional containers?***

PAY DAY LENDING

Over the past four years, Iowa's legislature has failed to pass reasonable limits on payday loans. Payday loans, which charge more than 400% on a two-week loan, trap consumers in a cycle of debt, as evidenced by research that shows 90% of the payday loan industry's revenues come from consumers who get five or more loans in a year. There are now more payday loan stores in the US than there are McDonald's restaurants. Seventeen states (and DC) have now banned payday lending, saving \$1.8 billion per year in predatory lending fees. Congress passed legislation to limit payday lending fees to 36% for loans to military families. ***What will you do to limit payday lending in Iowa?***

VOTING

Voting is one of the most basic ways we participate in our democracy. Government should not put up barriers to that participation, particularly after years of making government more accessible to all. Iowans are known for their strong, non-partisan approaches to governance. Our election systems are fair and have never had the high-profile problems that many states have faced. Unfortunately, proposed legislation in the 2011 session would have required Iowans to show a state-issued ID before being allowed to vote, despite there being no incidences of voter misrepresentation. The League of Women Voters of Iowa firmly believes voting is a right and requiring voters to show state-issued photo identification disenfranchises the poor, out of state college students, people with disabilities, older Iowans, and others. It is also expensive (\$1.7 million just for documents alone) and is opposed by the bipartisan Iowa Association of County Auditors. The burden will be greatest for citizens for whom it is most cost prohibitive or inconvenient to take off work, find transportation, stand in line, and apply for documentation. This requirement would disenfranchise the very people who currently must work the hardest to vote. ***What will you do to eliminate barriers to voting - and how will you make sure such things like voter ID requirements are not mandated?***

GUN CONTROL

The League of Women Voters of Iowa does not oppose all gun ownership, but our Second Amendment right is not absolute. The League supports common sense regulations which include child safety locks, restrictions on the size of ammunition magazines, closing gun show loop holes, and a reinstatement on the ban on assault weapons. No retreat laws and laws that increase the use of concealed weapons do not bring community peace - less than 1% of all gun deaths involve self-defense; 99% of gun deaths are suicides or homicides. Nearly 20 bills were introduced in the 2011 session to "liberalize" our state's gun laws. There are numerous situations which leave us asking "why did this happen?" - Virginia Tech, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, Coach Ed Thomas, the list continues to grow. ***What restrictions on guns would you be willing to support - and would you oppose efforts to "liberalize" gun laws in Iowa?***

HEALTH REFORM

Many states are moving quickly to implement national health care reform and take advantage of the many early funding opportunities available to states that seize the opportunity. Several states have created a cabinet level multi-agency boards to coordinate efforts, share resources, and provide an open and transparent process. Iowa lawmakers seem unable to agree on an approach to the state's Health Insurance Exchange - whether to make it information-only like Utah or full service like Massachusetts. But Iowa is running out of time - it must either create an Exchange in 2012, or opt into a federal exchange. ***Given it is a short session and time is running out, what do you plan to do to make sure Iowa is ready and in a strong position to implement national health insurance reform when it goes into effect in 2014?***
