



## League of Women Voters of Minnesota Records

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# ACTION

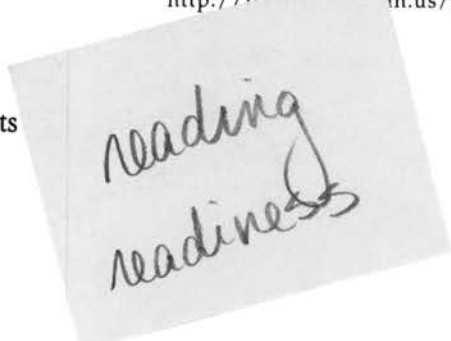
# ALERT



THE LEAGUE  
OF WOMEN VOTERS  
MINNESOTA

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**To:** Local League Presidents and 10-Minute Activists  
**From:** Catherine Shreves, Education Lobbyist  
**Date:** April 4, 1997  
**Subject:** Education Funding



1919  
A VOICE  
FOR CITIZENS,  
A FORCE  
FOR CHANGE  
1994

**LWVMN Education Positions** support adequate funding to make programs of comparable substance available to all, as well as categorical aids for programs for children with special needs.

**Proposed Legislation:** HF 963 (Wagenius, Entenza, Biernat and Kelso) and SF 749 (Ranum, Knutson, D.H. Johnson, Krentz, Janezich) are companion bills that:

1. make early reading instruction part of the required curriculum for teacher candidates;
2. provide challenge grants to schools for early intervention reading instruction (the schools may choose one program from a number of nationally accepted intervention programs); and
3. provide challenge grants to train teachers to teach early intervention reading and writing skills;
4. give priority in grant funding to schools with high concentrations of students receiving free and reduced lunch.

**Rational for LWVMN support of this legislation:** The League supports funding for programs that improve education for our children through our education positions supporting consistent and adequate state funding for education as and through our social policy position supporting programs to combat poverty.

Research indicates that a child's success in learning to read in the first grade is the best predictor of the child's ultimate success in schooling as well as all of the events and outcomes that correlate with that (including lack of behavior problems and delinquent behavior). In addition, research shows that children's first grade reading achievement depends most of all on how much children know about print and print concepts before they get to school. These differences in preschool preparedness can be equalized through early intervention reading programs.

This bill provides an incentive for school sites to use alternative strategies when those at the school find that the district curriculum has failed to reach some of the children. The legislation provides challenge grants to school sites that have applied to use a nationally established, research-based, early intervention reading curriculum that requires high parental involvement. The grants are to be targeted to schools that have high concentrations of students receiving free and reduced lunch in districts throughout the state.

The challenge grants to instruct and train teachers to teach these early intervention reading and writing skills as well as the challenge grants to schools will be administered by the commissioner of children, families, and learning.

#### Action Required:

These companion bills are currently in budget committees listed on the following page. **To survive, SF 749 needs to get out of committee by April 9; HF 693 needs to get out of committee by April 9 as well. Please call your legislators by these dates** if they are on these committees to garner their support for these bills. Legislators serving on these committees are listed on the next page, along with their identifying district numbers and home towns. **If you're going to make only one call, call your Representative, because support in the House is a bit shakier!!**

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#### **House K-12 Education Finance Division Members**

Chair: Becky Kelso - 35B Shakopee  
Vice Chair: Leslie Schumacher - 17B Princeton  
Lead Republican: LeRoy Koppendrayner - 17A Princeton  
Len Biernat - 59A Minneapolis  
Lyndon Carlson - 46B Crystal  
Matt Entenza - 641 St. Paul  
Mindy Greiling - 54B Roseville  
Alice Johnson - 48B Spring Lake Park  
Tony Kielkucki - 20B Lester Prairie  
Rob Leighton - 27B Austin  
Harry Mares - 55A White Bear Lake  
Robert Ness - 20A Dassel  
Alice Seagren - 41A Bloomington  
David Tomassoni - 5B Chisholm  
Jim Tunheim - 1A Kennedy  
Charile Weaver - 49A Anoka  
Ken Wolf - 41B Burnsville  
Kalis (ex officio non-voting)  
Solberg (ex officio non-voting)

#### **Senate K-12 Education Budget Division Members**

Chair: Larry Pogemiller - 59 Minneapolis  
Vice Chair: Charles Wiger - 55 North St. Paul  
Paula Hanson - 50 Ham Lake  
Jerry Janezich - 5 Chisholm  
Ember Reichgott Junge - 46 New Hope  
David Knutson - 36 Burnsville  
Jane Krentz - 51 May Township  
Keigh Langseth - 9 Glyndon  
Thomas Neuville - 25 Northfield  
Gen Olson - 34 Minnetrista  
Sandra Pappas - 65 St. Paul  
Martha robertson - 45 Minnetonka  
Kenric Scheevel - 31 Preston  
Linda Scheid - 47 Brooklyn Park



## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

MINNESOTA

550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (612) 224-5445

### Counterpoint to Katherine Kersten's Column

We read with interest Katherine Kersten's Oct. 15th and Nov. 5th columns regarding the Board of Education's proposed Educational Diversity Rules, as well as the public reaction. Ms. Kersten certainly deserves credit for starting a long-needed public discussion on the proposed Diversity Rules and educational equity. The tone however, has made it difficult to have a thoughtful discussion on the proposed Diversity Rules and educational equity.

The League of Women Voters has a long history of supporting educational equity—adequate funding to make programs of comparable substance available to all. This struggle for equality in educational opportunity has taken on a new sense of urgency as our at-risk students are failing school at an alarming rate. Perhaps this sense of urgency has made us lose sight of an important issue—that we need a rigorous curriculum as well as an inclusive one.

We are concerned with the proposed Diversity Rules because—in and of themselves—they are unlikely to accomplish what they say they are devised to do: close the gap in student achievement. An inclusive curriculum is important, but—in and of itself—will not succeed in closing the achievement gap. While there is research that indicates that racism, classism, sexism and handicapism can hinder student learning, legislating these away is not enough to level the playing field.

In addition to an inclusive curriculum—perhaps even more importantly—children need a rigorous educational system using “best practices” in each classroom—research based teaching methods that are proven effective. We would recommend that the State Board of Education promote the use of a “best practices” curriculum—as well as an inclusive curriculum—to address the achievement gap. We recommend that interested citizens participate in this discussion by attending the State Board of Education's meetings on November 17th, 9am and 7pm in Room 5 of the State Office Building.

Judy Duffy, President, League of Women Voters of Minnesota

Catherine Shreves, League of Women Voters of Minnesota Education Lobbyist



## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

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550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (612) 224-5445

Testimony before the House Education Committee  
K-12 Education Finance Division  
Janet Gendler, Lobbyist  
March 27, 1995

I am speaking today on behalf of the members and supporters of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota.

We support increased state responsibility in creating equal public educational opportunities. We believe that racial balance in the schools is crucial to assuring equal opportunities. Since 1967, the League of Women Voters of Minnesota has shown support of correction of racial imbalance in the schools in which the state has the power to investigate, to get and enforce standards, and to give extra financial help to achieve these standards.

In 1989, the Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues of Women Voters (CMAL) adopted a study of metro-wide school integration/desegregation. The resulting study discussed the history of desegregation in the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts, reviewed specific plans, and presented human and economic reasons for creating an integrated society. Although each of the study members had personal views on the best ways to provide equal educational opportunities for our public school students, it was their job to present information to League members as well as to any other interested citizens. After careful study and discussion throughout the 29 city and suburban Leagues, CMAL reached the following consensus:

CMAL supports the following measures to achieve school integration/desegregation in the metropolitan area:

- Mandatory participation by school districts;
- Voluntary participation by students;
- A combination of student exchanges, magnets and incentives;
- A combination of incentive plans for school districts and individuals funded by state money;
- Redrawing of school district lines, as necessary.

Although this position was formed by metropolitan League members, we feel this reflects legitimate citizen interest and concern about providing equal public opportunities for all Minnesota's children. Like voters in our state, most League members are concerned about education. Like voters in our state, most League members don't have children in school; but all want a positive education outcome for all our children.

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota has supported busing children as one mode of correcting racial imbalance. We feel ultimately that segregated housing and other factors have created the imbalance in Minnesota's schools, within school districts as well as between districts. While we support efforts of the schools that are forced to deal with society's problems, we believe there should be a comprehensive approach that deals with issues such as housing, public transportation, economic development, job creation and land use.

In the meantime, the League of Women Voters of Minnesota supports state funds for school districts and the Department of Education to continue to explore ways to improve the racial balance in our schools.





THE LEAGUE  
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550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (612) 224-5445

Testimony to the House Education Committee  
on H.F. 932  
by Janet Gendler, LWVMN Education Lobbyist  
March 22, 1994

My name is Janet Gendler. I am testifying on behalf of the nearly 2600 members and supporters of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota. The League supports H. F. 932 as a means of encouraging school districts to employ women and people of color as school administrators.

On a national level, the League of Women Voters supports promotion of social and economic justice, equal rights for all, and efforts to combat discrimination. We have advocated affirmative action programs for minorities and women through legislation, regulation, and litigation. On a state level, the League supports state responsibility in creating equal public educational opportunities for all Minnesota children.

Some of the most important lessons we teach our children are not what we say but what we do. A child who sees very few, if any, women and people of color as school superintendents or even as principals, learns to expect that. Students as well as adults in the community need to learn that school leadership roles can be filled successfully by people other than white men.

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota believes that a student's access to a good education should not depend upon the wealth of the school district. We support this program that would be available to all school districts in the state, so that each student may learn the lesson of equality of opportunity.



## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

MINNESOTA

550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (612) 224-5445

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee  
on Amendments to SF 157  
by Janet Gendler, LWVMN Education Lobbyist  
April 13, 1993

My name is Janet Gendler. I am testifying on behalf of the nearly 2600 members and supporters of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota.

The League of Women Voters recognizes the need for review of rules and statutes. They should be deleted if they are no longer necessary or obsolete. Innovative means to achieve the desired goals may need to be instituted if compliance is poor and the state may need to look at a new way to achieve desired outcomes. However, we would like to see a more careful process of eliminating rules and statutes. We would like to have time for significant public input. Although rules may be cumbersome and filled with administrative demands, there are times that they are the only way to be fair to students, parents, and teachers. Without rules, there may be no way to set the standards. School districts could ignore criticism of curriculum and programs and communities would have little means for justifying their concerns. The PER process is one mandated way for community input--which education continues to want and which the League of Women Voters supports. We would like to ensure a means of community involvement.

Ideally, we would like you to defer any action on this bill until after interim session hearings, but we would like now to express our concerns on these issues in which we have had direct involvement and you are addressing tonight--the Inclusive Educational Program Rule (Minnesota Rules Part 3500.0550) and the Gender Equity in Sports (Minnesota Rules Part 3535.3100 and 3535.3500).

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota supports equal access to a good public education for all Minnesota children. The League was instrumental in developing the rule. We testified at the Minnesota State Board of Education in support of its establishment. We continue to support this rule in various ways, including sending copies to League members and encouraging monitoring of school districts.

Much time and process went into making the Inclusive Education Rule, which requires multicultural, gender fair and disability sensitive curriculum. We don't feel the job is done. There still are school districts out of compliance.

The League of Women Voters supports equal access to a good public education for all Minnesota children. The League supported the rule as it was established. We have encouraged League members to monitor its implementation in local districts. In 1980, we published "What's the Score in Minnesota," a project to monitor equality of opportunity for women in athletics in Minnesota public schools.

We believe that it is premature to remove these rules. We stress the need to remove the deletion and give the rules more discussion.



We have done our best to highlight rules we think should not be repealed. Without time for hearings and without staff, we may be missing other issues as well as the subtleties or consequences of those we did notice. If we as an attentive advocacy group feel rushed and frustrated by the committee's process, we are sure there are many citizens unaware of this mandate repeal. The League of Women Voters, favoring citizen involvement, is concerned that citizens without formal affiliation with citizen advocacy groups such as ours have not been allowed to participate in this process that involves such drastic changes.



## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

MINNESOTA

550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (612) 224-5445

April 12, 1993

Dear Senator:

We represent a large and diverse group of organizations which have a common but not necessarily exclusive interest about issues affecting women. We have a number of common concerns about SF 157 which repeals many education rules and mandates.

The state has the primary responsibility for the education of students. Furthermore, the state has constitutional responsibility for equality of opportunity and for the health and safety of citizens. While the state delegates to local districts the delivery of education, it does adopt rules and laws to assure equity and accountability. Because of this we wish to address our general concerns about the repeal:

1. Loss of equality of opportunity in curriculum and activities in the schools;
2. No assurance there will be programs for preventive health care and education, for example, chemical abuse, nutrition, teen health;
3. Loss of programs for safety including: CPR training, sexual abuse, violence prevention;
4. Lack of attention to human relations issues by eliminating requirements for staff training, inclusive education rule, etc.
5. Diminution of community involvement in the schools with the elimination of PER and other advisory groups.

There is strong historical justification for most of the rules but we recognize that conditions change and it is prudent to review them periodically. However, the summary repeal during a crowded legislative session belies the enormity of the task. Summary repeal prevents consideration of the serious implications of radical change.

We urge the legislature to set up a practical and realistic review process during the 1993 Interim for carefully scrutinizing the pros and cons and the cost implications of rules and mandates. This process should be open and provide opportunity for all sides to be heard.

If you would like, individual representatives of our organizations are willing to discuss particular rules or mandates and how they affect issues of concern to respective organizations.

Sincerely,

Kay Erickson  
President

See Attached Signators

Linda Wilson  
President Junior League of Minneapolis

Billie Tracey  
President St Paul American Association  
of University Women

Alice Ellis  
President  
Minnesota American Assn. of  
University Women

Janetella Gifford, R.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.  
Public Policy Chair, Minnesota Dietetic Association

Miriam Selzer (by Daphne Bradach)  
President, Older Women's League of Minnesota

Christine K. Norton  
President / Co-founder  
Minnesota Breast Cancer Coalition  
Gemma Perpet  
Dir. of Public Affairs  
Planned Parenthood of MN

Lili Chertok  
President

National Council of Jewish Women, Minneapolis

Paula Tiffney  
President

Minnesota Home Economics Association



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## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

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550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (612) 224-5445

**Testimony to the Minnesota State Board of Education  
Concerning Draft Revision of Chapter 3535  
Rule on Desegregation  
by Janet Gendler, LWVMN Lobbyist  
February 25, 1993**

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota supports increased state responsibility in creating equal public educational opportunities and believes that racial balance in the schools is crucial to assuring equal opportunities. To the extent that we feel that this or any rule will achieve that goal, we can support it, or parts within it. We have supported busing children as one mode of correcting racial imbalance. We feel ultimately that segregated housing and other factors have created the imbalance in Minnesota's schools, within school districts as well as between districts. While we support efforts of the schools to deal with society's problems, we believe there should be a comprehensive approach that deals with issues such as housing, public transportation, economic development and job creation.

Because of its complexity and its potentially massive ramifications, we believe that this is a legislative issue. It needs public attention and public input. It needs financial incentives and perhaps disincentives, for planning as well as for implementation. Correcting racial imbalance in the schools is only one facet of a complex set of issues.

In the meantime the Supreme Court standard that "separate is not equal" compels us to correct racial imbalance in our schools. Although we appreciate the efforts of the Board to create a rule addressing school integration, not merely desegregation, we find the present draft unfocused, lacking in measurable guidelines for desired outcomes, and without consequences for noncompliance. Rather than showing leadership in what can be an emotionally explosive issue - where one's child goes to school - this rule change would allow districts to hide behind plans and could even encourage resegregation. Even the language of the rule change reflects this: it tends to "encourage" change rather than "direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation..." as stated in the current rule.

We believe that the State of Minnesota has the ultimate responsibility for desegregation/integration. The state must set the standards, rather than relying on the good-faith interdistrict "sharing of responsibility" set out in the policy statement. The rule must include measurable standards. The elimination of the 15% rule took away the one guide that we ordinary people can understand. The exact percentage is not the issue, but some numerical standard must be set.

Who enforces interdistrict coalitions, particularly when there is no additional district funding for planning and administration time? Districts may or may not work together to correct imbalances, depending on local politics and pressures. There is not an overall inter-district council or other body to assure a coordinated plan rather than discreet district councils only. We are concerned that the language is too voluntary. It should be more directive and contain specific numerical goals. There should be stated penalties for noncompliance.

We support the concept of including the "stakeholders" in the planning. We hope that people who participate will feel that their participation has meaning. There is nothing that can be put into the rule to assure this. It will depend on good leadership and the good will of the school districts to listen and to respond.

STATEMENT CONCERNING DRAFT REVISION OF CHAPTER 3535  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
RULE ON DESEGREGATION

February 18, 1993

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota supports increased state responsibility in creating equal public opportunities and believes that racial balance in the schools is crucial to assuring equal opportunities. To the extent that we feel that this or any rule will achieve that goal, we can support it, or parts within it. We have supported busing children as one mode of correcting racial imbalance. We feel ultimately that segregated housing and other factors have created the imbalance in the schools, and have worked to correct these problems as well. In other words, we support efforts of the schools to deal with the problem, but we believe that there needs to be a more comprehensive approach than busing, choice or other methods of moving children around.

Our overall impression is that the new rule makes a number of substantial changes in policy. First it eliminates explicit reference to the concept that "inequality in educational opportunity is caused by racial segregation," language contained in the current rule. Second, it tends to "encourage" change rather than "direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation..." as stated in the current rule. Third, the new focus is on "outcomes" and eliminates the guidelines for desegregation. (Specifically, the draft eliminates the statement that segregation occurs when "the minority composition of the pupils in any school building exceeds the minority racial composition of the student population of the entire district, for the grade levels served by that school building by more than 15 percent".) Fourth, the draft rule puts responsibility for desegregation on groups of districts rather than on separate districts. Fifth, this rule is linked with that on inclusive education and by being so linked, adds the dimension of providing a better understanding of the traditions and cultures of various ethnic, racial and religious groups. Sixth, parent and student choice is inserted as a mode of encouraging student movement away from their local school in order to achieve racial balance. Finally, there is clear provision for involvement of persons and groups with interest in the issue to participate in creating the plans.

What follows are our comments on the major policy changes:

1. We think there should be explicit reference to the concept that equality of educational opportunity is at risk when there is racial segregation in the schools. While mixing ethnic, racial and cultural groups may have the effect of providing a better understanding among groups, that is not the primary or sole public policy goal of desegregation. The current rule refers to "improving academic achievement of disadvantaged children," as well as increasing understanding. Both points are important and should be included.

2. We like the language in the original rule which is more directive. Section 3535.0300 which has been deleted in the 11/16/92 DRAFT states that the rules "are to direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation." We believe it is the role of the state to assure racial balance, both by regulation and by financial assistance.
3. We also think outcomes are important. To the extent possible, all children should be educated so that, as the draft states, efforts "would result in equal educational outcomes for learners." However, we believe that the state must set some numerical guidelines for the racial mix along with assisting and encouraging districts to assure student achievement.
4. Broadening the geographical area within which desegregation occurs may have merit in that it would foster cooperation among districts and perhaps some innovation and it could spread out the responsibility for achieving balance. However, this puts the burden on students, families and the schools for correcting wrongs which have much broader causes like availability of employment, housing and public services. Admittedly, concern about those broader causes lies outside the issue of revising a State Board of Education Rule, but it cannot be ignored completely. We also have concerns that the language lacks "teeth." Districts may or may not work together to try to correct imbalances, depending on the local politics and pressures. Stronger language which is more directive and contains specific numerical goals reflecting a stronger state role would strengthen this concept.
5. As mentioned above, we believe that desegregation and integration are crucial for creating equal opportunities in the form of adequate funding, staffing, programs and facilities so that all students can achieve academically. We like tying this policy with the one on inclusive education (which we also have supported from its original inception) so that the parallel benefit of desegregation, cultural understanding, may also be achieved.
6. We support providing parents and students alternatives as a way of assuring opportunity, providing the choices are of uniform quality. We have reservations about whether this incentive for moving children around will create the kind of "mix" needed to assure uniform quality. And it still doesn't address the issue of why people live where they do.
7. We support the concept of including the "stakeholders" in the planning and hope that people who participate will feel that their participation has meaning. There is nothing that can be put into the rule to assure this. It will depend on good leadership and good will of the schools to listen and respond.





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MINNESOTA

550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103 PHONE (612) 224-5445

February 12, 1993

The Honorable Myron Orfield  
MN House of Representatives  
413 State Office Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Orfield:

Thank you for your interest in the position of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota on the proposed revision of the State Board of Education's rule on racial integration.

Our overall impression is that the new rule makes a number of substantial changes in policy. First, it eliminates explicit reference to the concept that "inequality in educational opportunity is caused by racial segregation." Second, it tends to "encourage," change rather than "direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation...". Third, the new focus is on "outcomes" and eliminates the guidelines for desegregation. Fourth, the rule puts responsibility for desegregation on groups of districts rather than on separate districts. Fifth, this rule is linked with that on inclusive education and by doing so, adds the dimension of providing a better understanding of the traditions and cultures of various ethnic, racial and religious groups. Sixth, parent and student choice is inserted as a mode of encouraging student movement away from their local school in order to achieve racial balance. Finally, there is clear provision for involvement of persons and groups with interest in the issue to participate in creating the plans.

The League supports increased state responsibility in creating equal public opportunities and believes that racial balance in the schools is crucial to assuring equal opportunities. To the extent that we feel that this or any rule will achieve that goal, we can support it, or parts within it. We have supported busing children as one mode of correcting racial imbalance. We feel ultimately that desegregated housing and other factors have created the imbalance in the schools, and have worked to correct these problems as well. In other words, we support efforts of the schools to deal with the problem, but feel that there needs to be a more comprehensive approach than busing, choice, or other methods of moving children around.

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1. We think there should be explicit reference to the concept that equality of educational opportunity is at risk when there is racial segregation in the schools. Mixing ethnic, racial and cultural groups can have the effect of providing a better understanding among groups, but that is not the primary public policy goal of desegregation.



February 12, 1993

2. We like the language in the original rule which is more directive.  
(NB 3535.0300 which has been deleted in the 2-1-93 DRAFT.) We believe it is the role of the state to assure racial balance, both by regulation and by financial assistance.
3. While we also think outcomes are important, we believe that the state must set some numerical guidelines for the racial mix along with assisting and encouraging districts to assure student achievement.
4. While broadening the geographical area within which desegregation occurs may have some merit, standing alone, it puts the burden on students, families and the schools for correcting wrongs which have much broader causes. We also have concerns that the language is so "encouraging" that districts may or may not work together to try to correct imbalances, depending on the local politics and pressures. Stronger language, reflecting a stronger state rule would strengthen this concept.
5. As mentioned above, we believe that desegregation and integration first of all will help create equal opportunities in the form of adequate funding, staffing, programs, etc. We like tying this policy with the one on inclusive education (which we also have supported from its original inception.)
6. We support providing parents and students alternatives as a way of assuring opportunity, providing the choices are of uniform quality. We have reservations about whether this incentive for moving children around will create the kind of "mix" needed to assure uniform quality. And it still doesn't get at the issue of why people live where they do.
7. We support the concept of including the "stakeholders" in the planning and hope that people who participate will feel that their participation has meaning. There is nothing that can be put into the rule to assure this. It will depend on good leadership and good will of the schools.

We hope that this outline has helped you understand the League's position on and interest in the challenge of assuring quality education for all Minnesota students. We would be happy to discuss this issue with you further.

Sincerely,



Janet Gendler  
LWVMN Lobbyist

JG/rk



**THE LEAGUE  
OF WOMEN VOTERS**

**MINNESOTA**

550 RICE STREET ST. PAUL, MN 55103  
PHONE (612) 224-5445

**MEMO**

C. Shreves, K. Graves, J. Gendler,  
**TO:** J. Johnson, P. Pluimer - LWVMpls  
C. Fuller - CMAL; E. Kluz, St. Paul  
**FROM:** J. McWilliams - LWVMN  
S. Simmonds (925-0405)

**SUBJECT:** Meeting on Rule Chapter 3535

**DATE:** February 17, 1993

MEETING NOTICE

Tuesday, Feb. 23, 1993

9:30 a.m.

at LWVMpls office - Young Quinlan Bldg.

81 South 9th Street, Room 335

333-6319 (office phone)

**AGENDA:** Discussion of State Rule Chapter 3535  
State Board of Education

See attached DRAFT statement

STATEMENT CONCERNING DRAFT REVISION OF CHAPTER 3535  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
RULE ON DESEGREGATION

February 18, 1993

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota supports increased state responsibility in creating equal public opportunities and believes that racial balance in the schools is crucial to assuring equal opportunities. To the extent that we feel that this or any rule will achieve that goal, we can support it, or parts within it. We have supported busing children as one mode of correcting racial imbalance. We feel ultimately that segregated housing and other factors have created the imbalance in the schools, and have worked to correct these problems as well. In other words, we support efforts of the schools to deal with the problem, but we believe that there needs to be a more comprehensive approach than busing, choice or other methods of moving children around.

Our overall impression is that the new rule makes a number of substantial changes in policy. First it eliminates explicit reference to the concept that "inequality in educational opportunity is caused by racial segregation," language contained in the current rule. Second, it tends to "encourage" change rather than "direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation..." as stated in the current rule. Third, the new focus is on "outcomes" and eliminates the guidelines for desegregation. (Specifically, the draft eliminates the statement that segregation occurs when "the minority composition of the pupils in any school building exceeds the minority racial composition of the student population of the entire district, for the grade levels served by that school building by more than 15 percent".) Fourth, the draft rule puts responsibility for desegregation on groups of districts rather than on separate districts. Fifth, this rule is linked with that on inclusive education and by being so linked, adds the dimension of providing a better understanding of the traditions and cultures of various ethnic, racial and religious groups. Sixth, parent and student choice is inserted as a mode of encouraging student movement away from their local school in order to achieve racial balance. Finally, there is clear provision for involvement of persons and groups with interest in the issue to participate in creating the plans.

What follows are our comments on the major policy changes:

1. We think there should be explicit reference to the concept that equality of educational opportunity is at risk when there is racial segregation in the schools. While mixing ethnic, racial and cultural groups may have the effect of providing a better understanding among groups, that is not the primary or sole public policy goal of desegregation. The current rule refers to "improving academic achievement of disadvantaged children," as well as increasing understanding. Both points are important and should be included.

2. We like the language in the original rule which is more directive. Section 3535.0300 which has been deleted in the 11/16/92 DRAFT states that the rules "are to direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation." We believe it is the role of the state to assure racial balance, both by regulation and by financial assistance.
3. We also think outcomes are important. To the extent possible, all children should be educated so that, as the draft states, efforts "would result in equal educational outcomes for learners." However, we believe that the state must set some numerical guidelines for the racial mix along with assisting and encouraging districts to assure student achievement.
4. Broadening the geographical area within which desegregation occurs may have merit in that it would foster cooperation among districts and perhaps some innovation and it could spread out the responsibility for achieving balance. However, this puts the burden on students, families and the schools for correcting wrongs which have much broader causes like availability of employment, housing and public services. Admittedly, concern about those broader causes lies outside the issue of revising a State Board of Education Rule, but it cannot be ignored completely. We also have concerns that the language lacks "teeth." Districts may or may not work together to try to correct imbalances, depending on the local politics and pressures. Stronger language which is more directive and contains specific numerical goals reflecting a stronger state role would strengthen this concept.
5. As mentioned above, we believe that desegregation and integration are crucial for creating equal opportunities in the form of adequate funding, staffing, programs and facilities so that all students can achieve academically. We like tying this policy with the one on inclusive education (which we also have supported from its original inception) so that the parallel benefit of desegregation, cultural understanding, may also be achieved.
6. We support providing parents and students alternatives as a way of assuring opportunity, providing the choices are of uniform quality. We have reservations about whether this incentive for moving children around will create the kind of "mix" needed to assure uniform quality. And it still doesn't address the issue of why people live where they do.
7. We support the concept of including the "stakeholders" in the planning and hope that people who participate will feel that their participation has meaning. There is nothing that can be put into the rule to assure this. It will depend on good leadership and good will of the schools to listen and respond.



STATEMENT CONCERNING DRFT REVISION OF CHAPTER 3535  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
RULE ON DESEGREGATION

February 15, 1993

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota supports increased state responsibility in creating equal public opportunities and believes that racial balance in the schools is crucial to assuring equal opportunities. To the extent that we feel that this or any rule will achieve that goal, we can support it, or parts within it. We have supported busing children as one mode of correcting racial imbalance. We feel ultimately that desegregated housing and other factors have created the imbalance in the schools, and have worked to correct these problems as well. In other words, we support efforts of the schools to deal with the problem, but feel that there needs to be a more comprehensive approach than busing, choice or other methods of moving children around.

Our over all impression is that the new rule makes a number of substantial changes in policy. First it eliminates explicit reference to the concept that "inequality in educational opportunity is caused by racial segregation," language contained in the current rule. Second, it tends to "encourage," change rather than "direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation..." as stated in the current rule. Third, the new focus is on "outcomes" and eliminates the guidelines for desegregation. (Specifically, the draft eliminates the statement that segregation occurs when "the minority composition of the pupils in any school building exceeds the minority racial composition of the student population of the entire district, for the grade levels served by that school building by more than 15 percent.) Fourth, the draft rule puts responsibility for desegregation on groups of districts rather than on separate districts. Fifth, this rule is linked with that on inclusive education and by being so linked, adds the dimension of providing a better understanding of the traditions and cultures of various ethnic, racial and religious groups. Sixth, parent and student choice is inserted as a mode of encouraging student movement away from their local school in order to achieve racial balance. Finally, there is clear provision for involvement of persons and groups with interest in the issue to participate in creating the plans.

What follows are our comments on the major policy changes:

1. We think there should be explicit reference to the concept that equality of educational opportunity is at risk when there is racial segregation in the schools. Mixing ethnic, racial and cultural groups can have the effect of providing a better understanding among groups, that is not the primary or sole public policy goal of desegregation. The current rule refers to "improving academic achievement of disadvantaged children," as well as increasing understanding. Both points are important and should be included.



2. We like the language in the original rule which is more directive. Section 3535.0300 which has been deleted in the 2/1/93 DRAFT states that the rules "are to direct and assist each school district in the identification of and the elimination of racial segregation." We believe it is the role of the state to assure racial balance, both by regulation and by financial assistance.

3. We also think outcomes are important. To the extent possible, all children should be educated so that, as the draft states, efforts "would result in equal educational outcomes for learners." However, we believe that the state must set some numerical guidelines for the racial mix along with assisting and encouraging districts to assure student achievement.

4. Broadening the geographical area within which desegregation occurs may have merit in that it would foster cooperation among districts and perhaps some innovation and it could spread out the responsibility for achieving balance. However, this puts the burden on students, families and the schools for correcting wrongs which have much broader causes like availability of employment housing and public services. Admittedly, concern about those broader causes lies outside the issue of revising a State Board of Education Rule, but it cannot be ignored completely. We also have concerns that the language lacks "teeth." Districts may or may not work together to try to correct imbalances, depending on the local politics and pressures. Stronger language which is more directive and contains specific numerical goals reflecting a stronger state role would strengthen this concept.

5. As mentioned above, we believe that desegregation and integration are crucial for creating equal opportunities in the form of adequate funding, staffing, programs and facilities so that all students can achieve academically. We like tying this policy with the one on inclusive education (which we also have supported from its original inception) so that the parallel benefit of desegregation, cultural understanding, may also be achieved.

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7. We support the concept of including the "stakeholders" in the planning and hope that people who participate will feel that their participation has meaning. There is nothing that can be put into the rule to assure this. It will depend on good leadership and good will of the schools to listen and respond.

### LWVMN POSITION ON TUITION VOUCHERS

LWVMN actively opposes school vouchers for k-12 education; the League believes the focus of state resources should be on continuing to improve the system that serves all children.

The education provided by public schools is essential to a democratic society. LWVMN believes that all Minnesota children should have equal access to a good public education. Funding for a public school system available to all students must be a priority for Minnesota.

LWVMN opposes a limited demonstration voucher plan which could be used for private or parochial schools because such use of public funding can have the following undesirable consequences:

- Violation of the Minnesota and United States Constitution; the state Constitution bans the use of public money for religious schools and the US Constitution requires separation of church and state.
- Potential discrimination in accepting students: Nonpublic schools are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, but they can have selective admissions policies that exclude certain children on the basis of academic achievement, religion, behavior, or special education needs. Public schools are required to serve all children.
- Reduction of educational accountability: In public schools there is a public process in place for citizens to exercise some oversight in educational choices. They can attend public meetings to address issues such as curriculum, activities and budgets; they can question decisions and offer suggestions. The public would lose this role in private schools.
- Reduction of financial accountability: Citizens have the right to elect public school board members who are responsible for education spending in their district. Taxpayers can voice their support or displeasure for those decisions in the voting booth. Use of public funds for private schools would shift control of those funds away from the public.
- Loss of financial and citizen support for public schools: Public schools serve a basic and important role in our society. They are required to serve the public good. Diverting tax dollars and parental involvement to nonpublic schools could have a negative impact on the public system, by removing these much needed resources.

**LWVMN supports a funding system for public K-12 education that is accountable and responsive to the taxpayers. Public schools are bound by federal, state and local controls to ensure equity, fairness and high standards: private schools are exempt from these controls. LWVMN believes that society has a responsibility to provide a good education for all students and that diversion of public resources to private schools will weaken that responsibility.**

Mr. Mike Kluznik  
Hastings High School  
1000 West 11th Street  
Hastings, MN 55033

April 25, 1996

Dear Mr. Kluznik:

Carol Frisch, Action Chair, asked me to send you a copy of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota's position on school vouchers. The League's education lobbyist provided testimony to the Senate Education Finance Committee in opposition to vouchers and spoke with other legislators to make them aware of our position.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at the League office, 612/224-5445.

Sincerely,

Meg Mannix  
Action Coordinator

enclosure

Meg:

4/25  
9:45

fr. Carol Frisk

Pls. mail a copy of  
our Voucher positions  
to:

Mike Kluzwik  
Hastings HS.  
1000 W. 11<sup>th</sup> St.,  
Hastings 55033

② yes, got 5/1 mtg.  
on calendar

Testimony before the  
Senate Education Committee  
Education Funding Division  
Janet Gendler, Lobbyist  
January 26, 1996

I am speaking today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota. The League opposes S.F. 1851, which would establish an education voucher program for private and parochial K-12 schooling.

The League of Women Voters supports the position that all Minnesota children should have equal access to a good public education, and we believe that the focus of state resources should be on continuing to improve the system that serves all children. A basic concern is that the Minnesota constitution bans public moneys for religious schools.

We foresee four undesirable consequences with the establishment of school vouchers: potential discrimination in accepting students, reduction of educational accountability, reduction of fiscal accountability, and loss of financial and citizen support for public schools.

Nonpublic schools are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, but they can have selective admissions policies that exclude students. Public schools are required to serve all students.

The reduction of accountability is especially troublesome to citizen groups like the League of Women Voters--as it should be to all who are concerned with the common good of our state and our children. Citizens lose the power to elect the school board members responsible for education spending when school choice is expanded to private schools. Dissatisfied parents and students can vote with their feet even now. They can leave a school by moving residences or by taking advantage of the public education options of charter schools or open enrollment. Taxpayers, many of whom have no children in school, traditionally express their displeasure in the voting booth. A private school choice system takes away the citizen's voice. In addition, citizens lose their legal rights to attend meetings, to influence or question decisions, and to examine documents of public bodies.

One of the most important challenges of our society today is maintaining support for the whole community. For example, last fall Minneapolis had an election for four seats on the Minneapolis School Board. There were 23 candidates for those four positions! Even more showed serious interest at the party endorsing conventions. Some of the candidates were very knowledgeable and concerned about the issues. Some were less informed, but they were willing to work on the



challenges of an urban school district. Some didn't bother to appear at candidate forums or to respond to questions for a voters' guide that the League helped coordinate. We need everyone to work together to educate our children. We need competent school board members. We need voters to keep them accountable. We need citizens who are concerned about what is being taught in all the classrooms. We need the whole community, not just parents, helping with the schools.

Educating our children isn't a marketplace issue. It's a public issue. We all need to be involved and stay involved. The children of Minnesota are all our children.