

The League of Women Voters of Illinois is engaged this year in a consensus study to update our criminal justice position. The participation of local Leagues is essential. The criminal justice position was last updated in the 1990s and our position needs to reflect the research and best practices that we have learned since then. We need to update our position in order to be active voices in improving criminal justice for all.

1. To quote Bryan Stevenson, author of “Just Mercy,” the opposite of justice is poverty. Crime thrives in poverty areas. To really do something about crime, poverty must be addressed. Our first consensus question asks: ***To reduce crime and violence, should there be investment in underserved and/or impoverished communities?***
2. Those entangled in the criminal justice system are disproportionately black, brown, and poor. Why is this? Bias is a strong factor and so we ask: ***Should there be periodic training for individuals working in the criminal justice system to recognize implicit racial and ethnic bias in order to more adequately work toward the goal of equal treatment under the law?***
3. Treatment that is suitable for men is not necessarily suitable for women and/or for those whose gender identity is different. We ask: ***Should a Gender-Responsive Approach be used for all offenders with the goal of equitable and appropriate treatment?***
4. Research and evidence based best practices lead to improved outcomes. In order to achieve these outcomes, relevant data will need to be shared from all Illinois 102 counties and 24 judicial circuits. Accurate and comprehensive data is difficult to collect when computer systems do not talk with each other. The question is: ***Are efficient data collection, data sharing, and transparency critical in an impartial and unbiased criminal justice system?***
5. In order to improve best practice outcomes, the various criminal justice stakeholders need to work together rather than in silos. Increased interaction and communication with stakeholders has shown to contribute to more equitable justice for all. A criminal justice coordinating council (CJCC) is a body of elected and senior justice system leaders (such as police chiefs and judges) that convene on a regular basis to coordinate systemic responses to justice issues. Stakeholders include police officers, judges, probation officers, parole officers, correctional officers, lawyers, court personnel, and could involve others such as substance use and mental health treatment providers; victim’s advocates; those offering housing resources. The question is: ***Should CJCCs include a wide representation from local justice system agencies, other government bodies, service providers, and the community?***

Resource: [Power point at 2019 LWVIL Preconvention Workshop](#)

