



Introduction to the Criminal Justice Update Study

At the 2017 LWVIL State Convention in Des Plaines, delegates approved a study to update its position on criminal justice during the 2017-2019 biennium. LWVIL's current position on criminal justice was last revised in 1995. Because of the complexity of the project and some unavoidable delays, the Board approved an extension of the update through the 2019-2021 biennium, and the membership endorsed the extension at the 2019 convention.

The current League Criminal Justice Position can be found [here](#).

Since 1995, much has changed in the criminal justice system. During the 1980s and 1990s, legislators responded to higher crime rates and widespread drug activity with harsh legislation: mandatory minimum sentences, longer sentences even for non-violent crimes, revocation or severe reduction in "good time" credits for people in prison. This response has resulted in overcrowded prisons and increased recidivism of those who leave prison. Prompted by this situation and encouraged by lower crime rates, legislators have become more open to criminal justice reform. "Best practices" and "evidence-based practices" in criminal justice have been developed and are being considered and/or adopted in the federal criminal justice system and in a number of state criminal justice systems.

Thus, we find that our current League criminal justice position fails to address some important aspects of the complex criminal justice system and the changes that are happening or that are being proposed. The Update Study Committee has examined our current position and is proposing additions to or modification of the existing position.

There is a wealth of research that has informed our decision-making. An important resource is the final report of the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform: [Final Report of CJSR](#) **Local League study groups are encouraged to read this important document with its twenty-seven recommendations for the Illinois criminal justice system.** Some of these recommendations have been adopted or enacted into law; many have not.

A number of these recommendations have informed our Update decisions and you will find this resource cited throughout our proposed updates. Along with the basic study document, **Background Information for all 14 Study Questions**, we have provided written and video resources, a speakers bureau, and a glossary.

To contact the Update Study Committee with questions or comments, email issues@lwvil.org and in the Subject Line "FOR CJ UPDATE"