



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
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To: Joint Committee on Finance

Re: Statement on 2007-2009 State Budget – Natural Resources

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin supports the following provisions of the Governor's budget:

- 1. Reauthorization of the Stewardship Fund at \$105 million per year for 10 years.** Consistent with our support of policies and programs which encourage acquisition of undeveloped areas, we supported the initial passage of the Stewardship Program and believe it has provided an invaluable service to the citizens of Wisconsin by protecting nearly half a million acres of undeveloped land. The increased funding is necessary to keep up with the dramatic increase in the price of land, particularly in the northern part of the state as paper companies make available for purchase vast tracts of previously undeveloped forestland.
- 2. \$30 million to fund a renewable energy grants and loans program.** We have for many years supported increased research, funding and tax incentives for development of new sources and improved methods of energy production. We strongly support the Governor's request for \$30 million to fund the development and commercialization of new technologies to increase renewable fuel or energy production, with \$5 million earmarked for the construction of a cellulosic ethanol plant in Wisconsin. This proposal will attract private investment as well, since grants under the fund could not exceed 50% of the costs of an eligible project.
- 3. Restoration of the position of Public Intervenor in the Department of Justice.** For thirty years the Public Intervenor advocated on behalf of the public's interest in natural resources, helping to protect underground drinking water supplies, wetlands, soils and forests. We supported the creation of the office of Public Intervenor and strongly opposed its elimination in the 1995-96 budget cycle. As the legal system has become increasingly inaccessible to any other than those with extensive financial resources, it is more important than ever to give ordinary citizens effective representation by restoring the office of the Public Intervenor.
- 4. Increase in the recycling tipping fee.** For many years, the League has supported measures to increase recycling throughout the state and reduce the amount of solid waste being dumped in landfills here. The amount of garbage dumped in Wisconsin from neighboring states continues to increase – up 46% last year alone – partly because of our relatively low tipping fees. The Governor's budget provides for an increase in the recycling tipping fee from \$3 to \$6 per ton, an increase estimated to generate \$18 million the first year and \$24 million the second year. The budget proposes to allocate much of that increase to the new Renewable Energy Grants and Loans program, which we also support. However, we believe that the recycling tipping fee should be increased more than the Governor's budget proposes, from \$3 to \$10 per ton. Such an increase would serve the dual purpose of reducing significantly the waste dumped in Wisconsin by neighboring states as well as increasing state funding for local recycling programs.