



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

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Governor Jim Doyle
115 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Doyle,

We are pleased that Wisconsin has rejected federal funds designated for abstinence-until-marriage education. We thank you for standing up for good educational policy and an individual's right to make informed choices.

The League of Women Voters works for a more informed society through education and full access to information. We also strongly support a woman's right to control her body by making informed, private reproductive choices and having full access to reproductive health care services.

We believe that federal funding for abstinence-until-marriage education programs attacks a school district's right to develop curriculum and limits students' ability to make healthy, informed decisions. Even without barriers of inadequate and improperly earmarked funding, too many schools already give too short shrift to sex education. We believe human growth and development instruction must include comprehensive, medically accurate sex education covering both abstinence and contraception. Only with complete information about the pressures of being a sexual creature can they make wise decisions now and in the future.

The League of Women Voters believes public policy should affirm our constitutional rights, including the right of the individual to make reproductive choices. That right is severely impeded by sex education that ignores sex. Local, state and national statistics indicate over half of teens are sexually active. Wisconsin has the eighth highest incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among teens. Only medically accurate, age appropriate, comprehensive human growth and development instruction will provide teens with the tools to prevent not only STIs but also unintended pregnancies. We are deeply concerned with the burdens of teenage parenthood: in our society, adolescents delay adulthood long past sexual maturity to become psychologically and economically independent. Those who are parents too soon restrict their opportunities and risk never developing to their full potential, while children of too-young parents are denied the guidance and support of mature adults. We also note that it is in the state's financial interest to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies.

Sex education is a necessary tool to wisely navigate our world, and children must be able to trust the information schools provide. If we tell them sex does not exist for teenagers, we are lying to them. Education on sexuality, contraception and pregnancy will reduce abortions and unintended pregnancies. Abstinence-until-marriage education funding undercuts the ability to make healthy and informed choices.

Refusing these federal funds is a significant first step and we hope you will continue this effort by demanding that the federal government provide funding for all sex education curricula. We congratulate you on your decision and look forward to working with you to see that all Wisconsin residents have the information they need to make wise choices and lead healthy lives.

Sincerely,

Melanie Ramey, President, League of Women Voters of Wisconsin