

Climate Change/Energy Study Committee Report and Position

Approved by LWVTSC Board 1/14/2025

Consensus reached by members present at information meeting 2/27/2025

Presented to membership 4/1/2025

Background

In April 2023, LWVTSC membership approved the development of a local league position on climate change. The committee was led by Vicki Arnett and Marc Galbraith. Prior to that action, LWVTSC had not undertaken a study as a local league on climate change and energy. However, LWVTSC members had taken other actions:

- Participation in the 2007 LWVK study on water and energy focused on fracking and water use.
- Participation in the 2018 LWVK study on water management.

LWVTSC previously approved two positions related to the environment:

- A position on Solid and Hazardous Waste Management approved in 2011.
- A position on Local Land Use, Planning and Zoning approved in 1983, updated in 1987 and revised in 1991, 1995 and 2009.

Work of the Committee

The committee formed and met regularly on a monthly basis beginning in the summer of 2023. It became clear to the committee that the scope of our work should focus on energy use and climate change due to the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the extent of global warming.

The committee sent members to observe local governing bodies such as Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board, Shawnee County Planning Commission in addition to Topeka City Council and Shawnee County Board of Commissioners. The committee read and discussed numerous articles and attended public education meetings and formed information sharing partnerships with League of Women Voters Lawrence Douglas County, Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board and Topeka Sierra Club.

The work of the committee also informed advocacy and testimony before the Shawnee County Planning Commission, Shawnee County Board of Commissioners, Topeka City

Council and Kansas Corporation Commission. Committee members reviewed the climate/energy use positions of other state and local leagues throughout the country. The committee, with approval from the LWVTSC Board, based testimony on the League of Women Voters U.S. position on Energy.

Several members of the committee interviewed leadership of the Climate + Energy Project, Shawnee County Solid Waste Department, Topeka Sustainability Advisory Board, Topeka Sierra Club and Sierra Club of Kansas. Members of the committee joined the LWWUS Climate Interest Group which developed a Municipal Climate Action Plan to assist local units of government to develop the most effective actions and processes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Based on this work, the committee recommends adoption of the following local position.

LWVTSC position on Climate Change/Energy

Adoption April 1, 2025

The LWVTSC position is based on the LWVUS Climate Interest Group Municipal Climate Action Plan and how Topeka/Shawnee County must act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions locally.

Local units of government, local businesses and residents are the first line of implementation of federal and state policy on climate change and energy. Global, federal and state policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions requires local action through local governing bodies, boards and commissions.

LWVTSC advocates for expedited action on the following:

- Development and implementation of a joint city/county energy plan which promotes a clean, sustainable low-carbon energy economy that includes all forms of renewable energy and transportation infrastructure. An energy plan must include data to measure benchmarks which support the goals of promoting clean energy.
- Development of policies encouraging the electrification of buildings.
- Development of policies and practices that incentivize the use of low-carbon energy sources, energy conservation and energy efficiency in buildings and transportation through building codes and use of joint economic development funds.
- Development and implementation of land use policies that reduce automobile dependence through building codes, renewable energy planning, promotion of alternative transportation through electrification of Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA) buses, publicly available EV charging stations and safe bicycle and pedestrian lanes/paths.
- Implementation of policies designed to adapt to the impacts of climate change in urban, rural, agricultural and natural settings through joint city/county renewable energy planning and emergency management collaboration.
- Identifying and implementing solutions that ease climate related hardships to low- and moderate-income households such as through energy efficiency programs, electrification of city buses and utility scale alternative energy, including public education.
- Engaging the business community in climate related matters such as reducing single use plastic distribution, consistent participation in recycling efforts and renewable energy use through tax incentives and building codes.
- Using incentives to conserve natural resources and promote alternative energy through all city/county contracts for solid waste disposal, public infrastructure

development, including building/housing code maintenance enforcement and housing program development.

- Providing incentives for the use of public transportation by developing a public transportation plan to include goals to reduce use of private vehicles and increase safe, accessible pedestrian and bicycle use.
- Inventorying the city and county owned vehicle fleets and making a plan to replace them with electric vehicles through planned replacement.
- Installing electric vehicle charging stations through city and county planning in public and private parking areas.
- Setting city and county goals to reduce the use of fossil fuel consumption through city and county contracts, including new and renovation construction projects.
- Gathering data and publicly report progress on reducing fossil fuel consumption in all economic sectors.
- Retrofitting public buildings to achieve greater energy efficiency and use of alternative energy sources, e.g. wind or solar.
- Incentivizing private development to incorporate energy efficiency technology and alternative energy sources in both new and renovation projects.
- Incentivizing residential, neighborhood, community and commercial solar energy collection and use.