



## 2023 Issue Paper: Criminal Justice

### Position Statement

The League of Women Voters of Washington recognizes the need for a “criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry.”

In addition, the League calls for the “elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities.”

### Summary of Issues for 2023 Legislative Session

A top legislative priority in 2023 will be coming up with a long-term response to the Washington Supreme Court’s 2021 decision in *State v. Blake*, which held that current state drug possession laws were unconstitutional. That same year, the legislature passed a stop-gap fix that ends in July. They now have an opportunity to acknowledge that substance use disorder should be treated as a public health issue rather than a criminal issue, and to ensure that sufficient funding and resources exist for treatment.

In addition, although the legislature made great strides in addressing the need for police reform and accountability in 2021, more work needs to be done. This year we’ll be advocating for bills that: (1) limit the use of traffic stops, (2) create a private right of action for those harmed by police violence, (3) empower the Attorney General’s Office to investigate patterns and practices of misconduct in law enforcement agencies, and (4) creating a statewide Office of Independent Prosecutor to make charging decisions in cases of serious or deadly use of force by law enforcement officers.

We’re also supporting legislation to reform sentencing laws, including bills that: (1) extend the age for review of juvenile sentences so that people who committed crimes under age 25 (instead of age 18) can seek review after serving 15 years, (2) exclude juvenile dispositions (juvenile points) from offender score calculations used to determine how long an adult sentence will be, and (3) limit the use of sentencing enhancements for certain drug and firearms violations.

Finally, we will be advocating for a bill that significantly restricts the use of solitary confinement in Washington prisons, in line with international standards.

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