

Submitted online: Feb. 28 for hearing on Feb. 29, 2024

Senator Justin Wayne, Chair, and Members of the Judiciary Committee

RE: LB1357 (McDonnell) – Prohibit camping on certain property owned by political subdivisions

## **OPPOSE**

Dear Senator Wayne and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

In 1989, the League of Women Voters of the U.S. reaffirmed its commitment to advocating for the most vulnerable individuals in our society by revising its official Meeting Basic Humans Needs stance, which includes “Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and access to health care.”<sup>1</sup>

Based on this decades old stance, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska opposes LB1357, which criminalizes being unhoused and neglects to address the root causes of homelessness.

Criminalizing individuals and families who are attempting to shelter themselves is unethical and counterproductive. It complicates their situation and could delay their ability to find and obtain housing by creating a criminal record, assessing fines and court fees, and financially burdening them even more. Criminal penalties will saddle people with criminal records that can limit employment options, restrict access to housing and erode family stability.

LB1357 allows for incarceration of up to three months. This would waste tax dollars and resources by populating our jails with a revolving door of nonviolent offenders, further traumatize individuals and only temporarily remove the visibility of homelessness. Cities where “camping laws” have been enacted show they result in the displacement of unhoused people to less safe areas and often to locations with less access to resources.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than working to make Nebraska a safe place for all Nebraskans, this bill establishes a punitive policy that will not contribute to reducing homelessness, worsen outcomes for homeless individuals and families, and waste taxpayer money. The League of Women Voters of Nebraska opposes LB1357 and asks that you do not advance it out of committee.

Respectfully,

Cat Henning, Co-Director of Social Policy, LWVNE  
Krystal Fox, Co-Director of Social Policy, LWVNE  
MaryLee Moulton, Co-President, LWVNE  
Janelle Stevenson, Co-President, LWVNE  
Rachel Gibson, Vice President-Action, LWVNE

<sup>1</sup>League of Women Voters of the United States. (2023, April 4). Impact on issues: A guide to public policy positions of the League of Women Voters. (2022- 2024), pp. 145-146.  
[https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/LWV\\_ImpactOnIssues2022-2024.pdf](https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/LWV_ImpactOnIssues2022-2024.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, T. (2019). No right to rest: Police enforcement patterns and quality of life consequences of the criminalization of homelessness. *Urban Affairs Review*, 55(1), 41-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087417690833>