



**CGA Education Committee
Public Hearing March 1, 2010**

**SB 279, AA Concerning Foreign Languages Taught in the Public Schools
Comments Submitted by Katherine Wilson, School Finance Specialist**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut supports a system of public education funding that makes available to each community financial resources sufficient to provide a suitable program of educational experiences to each child. We believe the state should...

- Fund through grants to towns 50% of the overall statewide cost of public elementary and secondary education.
- Distribute funds in a way that recognizes both the relative ability of different communities to finance schools from local resources and the various factors that influence the cost of educating different children.
- Target additional funds toward improving academic achievement in communities with concentrations of disadvantaged children.

The League opposes SB 279 because it provides no new funding to cover the significant additional costs it would impose on school districts, particularly poor districts whose students may not currently take world language courses in great numbers.

The bill would require high school students beginning with the class of 2016 (freshmen entering in the fall of 2012) to complete at least two years of world language in order to graduate. This represents a laudable goal, given the increasing diversity of Connecticut's population and the growing interconnectedness of today's world, but when towns all across the state continually struggle to maintain existing educational programs, we believe that such a new, unfunded mandate is simply unaffordable.

Even if the bill were amended to provide the state's full share of its cost, we would still question its affordability. In two years school districts undoubtedly will still be seeking to restore staff and programs eliminated during the current recession and will scarcely be in a position to implement an expensive new program such as this.