



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION NETWORK

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To: Wisconsin Legislators

Re: Support of an expansion of Treatment Alternatives and Diversion programs in the state budget

The League of Women Voters continues to urge support for further development and reliance on alternatives to incarceration. Wisconsin's public safety policy is primarily based on increased prison sentencing while ignoring rehabilitation and community corrections. Corrections are a huge consumer of our state's fiscal resources and will continue to be, if our failed policies are not corrected. The fact that one of the first actions of the Joint Finance Committee on receiving the new budget was to increase Corrections by \$9.3 million, because of an increased prison population, highlights the need for a more effective use of these resources.

One of the positive changes would be an increase in funding for Treatment Alternatives and Diversions (TAD). In 2007, state funding of about \$1 million per year established pilot programs in seven counties. Through drug and alcohol courts, treatment centers and other initiatives, the program saved twice that amount in criminal justice costs. The recent evaluation report of TAD programs pronounces this a very successful effort resulting in lowered jail and prison populations and a lowered rate of repeat crimes. This was true in both rural and urban counties! The evaluation was done by the Office of Justice Assistance with an advisory committee of Department of Corrections representatives, law enforcement personnel, judges and others connected with the criminal justice system.

The League joins with other citizens and organizations in this state who are promoting better use of our correctional resources. The League strongly supports the expansion of those earlier TAD programs as now envisioned in the "11X15" project. The 11X15 project is a planned effort to use tax dollars for treatment of addiction and mental health at a local level rather than continuing to grow the state prison population. By expanding the funds for these grants, all counties can develop treatment and alternatives for non-violent offenders which will lower the jail and prison populations, improve physical and mental health, maintain employment and lead to stronger communities.

Please note that in 2008, then Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker endorsed the TAD program as follows: "Early intervention programs result in better outcomes for individuals who need rehabilitation in our community. We appreciate the State's investment in these programs, which can benefit the entire correctional system in Wisconsin by reducing jail and prison terms."

Just as education funding can be based on successful practices, certainly the successful practices of our Corrections system should be rewarded as well. The League urges the support of the 11X15 project and a re-investment in our correctional resources.