



TESTIMONY ON LB 407  
EXECUTIVE BOARD  
FEBRUARY 2, 2017

I am Sherry Miller, President of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, testifying in support of LB 407 creating a Whiteclay Commission. I want to thank Janice Walker, a League member, for bringing attention to the circumstances in Whiteclay to the League last July and for her assistance in preparing this testimony.

The League of Women Voters supports the efforts of Senator Pansing Brooks to seek solutions to the well documented problems that exist in Whiteclay, Nebraska. Our support is based on the position of the National League related to the well being of children. This position states, “the League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the full development and ensure the safety of all children. These include child abuse/neglect prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, family support services and violence prevention.”

There is a very high incidence of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder on the Pine Ridge Reservation. It is estimated that one in four children born in Pine Ridge is affected by this disorder, causing untold suffering and medical expenses that will last throughout their lifetime. Infant mortality is three times the national average.

In addition, the rate of teen suicide is four times the national average. In just seven months in 2015, there were 11 suicides and 176 attempts at suicide by Pine Ridge youth.

The lack of law enforcement in Whiteclay has led to a lawless situation, where murder has occurred and gone unsolved. There are reports of sex trafficking, DUIs, and domestic violence, all of which put children, as well as adults, in unsafe situations.

One requirement of LB 407 is for the task force to recommend programs to address the needs of children and help them escape the cycle of alcoholism. Do any such programs exist now despite the nearly overwhelming need? LB 407 creates a vehicle by which information can be obtained.

Senators, the League urges you to take a hard look at Whiteclay and the desperate situation that exists, in large part, because our state has for many, many years turned a blind eye to this remote village and its effect on our neighbors just across the border.

Lastly, because the League of Women Voters of Nebraska believes that Native Americans should participate in the formulation, development, implementation, and valuation of all policies affecting them, I encourage the makeup of the Task Force to include Native Americans.