

LOCAL PROGRAM PLANNING

Program is the League's "Reason for Being," the basis for both education and action efforts.

League program consists of those governmental issues that League members choose for concerted study and action at the local, state and national levels. It includes both adopted positions, statements of where the League stands on issues of public policy that are used for action, and issues for study that will lead to a position and action.

League program originates with League members. Once members have been stimulated to think about the widest possible range of choices, the League collects the members' ideas as presented at biennial program planning meetings.

On a local, state or national level the procedure is the same. The Board of Directors reviews the suggestions from the planning meetings, evaluates and coordinates them with the rest of the League's projects and then recommends the program, as either recommended or non-recommended study items, to the members at their local annual meeting, state or national convention.

The League program process begins with selection and adoption, continues with study and discussion, followed by consensus/concurrence, and culminates in action and change.

This year, all of our program committees have made a special effort to evaluate the positions they use or have used. The following material contains our present program as well as the committee comments and recommendations.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE CINCINNATI AREA PROGRAM

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

Support of Modernization of Hamilton County Government

Position: The LWVCA supports the modernization of county government through some form of reorganization, such as adoption of a county charter or one of the alternative forms of county government permitted by Ohio Law.

Criteria to be used in defining/judging "modernization":

Group A

1. The county executive should be appointed by the county governing body.
2. The county executive should have budgetary responsibilities and powers of policy execution and be directly answerable to the county governing body.
3. Hamilton County governing body should have implied powers and some self-taxing ability.

Group B

1. The county governing body should be elected in combination method including districts and at-large and should have 5-11 members.
2. Means of citizen participation should be explicitly provided.

Group C

1. Members of the county governing body should serve 4-year, staggered terms.
2. Means of citizen recourse should be explicitly provided.
3. All county department heads should be appointed.

Background: The LWVCA initially supported county reorganization in 1933 and supported a charter for Hamilton County in 1935. Our present LWV position for modernization was adopted in 1967. In 1980, after a two-year study, LWVCA adopted a set of criteria by which to judge any future attempt at county

reorganization. In 1981, we were part of a coalition that drafted a county charter and circulated petitions to place it on the ballot. Support in the community was not forthcoming, so the effort ended.

2009 County Government Committee Statement: This is a current focus of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC); with a view toward some restructuring that will support expanded sharing of services, etc. The CG Committee feels that this Position, adopted in 1967, can be an important basis for LWVCA involvement in monitoring BOCC deliberations and possible advocacy of certain proposals or considerations.

Recommendation: RETAIN

Criteria for Hamilton Countywide Voted Property Tax Levies

Position: A model tax levy process would include:

1. A committee of citizens with the authority to review tax levy proposals and tax levy recipient organizations; to review the requesting agencies' financial, management and performance audits; and make recommendations to the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners. This committee must be adequately funded and staffed.
2. Reduction of the total number of voted levies without sacrificing needed services.
3. Timing that prevents placing all levies on a ballot at the same time.
4. Funding county services based on a determined level of need that balances funds, services and resources.
5. Funding broadly defined services that can respond to changing conditions and needs.
6. The provision of meaningful opportunities for citizen involvement, input, monitoring and review.
7. Assuring agency accountability to the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners for the appropriate use of tax levy dollars.
8. Ballot language that is understandable to citizens and accurately describes services funded by the proposed levy.

2009 County Government Committee

Statement: Adopted by the Board in December 2005, this Position is quite relevant to current BOCC considerations about possible improvement to its property tax levy process. These criteria were the basis of a letter sent in 2008 by LWVCA to the BOCC and the chairman of the Tax Levy Review Committee in support of the chairman's inflation adjustment proposal.

Recommendation: RETAIN

Support of Certain Criteria for Methods of Service Delivery

Position: The LWVCA supports criteria for service delivery in areas of:

1. Relationships with other governments and service providers
2. Accountability and responsiveness
3. Taxes, fees and assessments
4. Quality of service.

I. The LWVCA believes the following features are of primary importance in judging new proposals for service delivery whether directly by government unit, public/private contract or a special district:

- A. In regard to relationships with other governments or service providers, service provider should take part in cooperative planning for the region. In the case of special districts, the proposal should include firm guidelines for dissolution or merging with another district or governmental unit.
- B. In regard to accountability and responsiveness, there should be
 - 1) clear responsibility for planning and delivery of the service,
 - 2) a clear line of recourse for unsatisfactory service,
 - 3) preannounced open board or council meetings,
 - 4) accountability to citizens through an elected official and
 - 5) annual financial and program reports readily available to the public.
- C. Elected officials should approve fees and assessments.

D. The service delivery plan should be the best service delivery option in terms of cost-effectiveness (assuming cost-effectiveness means the best service for a reasonable price, not just low bid); provide for qualified staff to plan, to write RFPs (requests for proposals) and contracts and to monitor and evaluate service.

Other features considered important but without consensus on the level of importance are:

- 1) the service provision not be duplicated by another source,
- 2) the proposal not have an adverse effect on prospects for change in county structure,
- 3) annual financial and program reports be reviewed at state and local level with results of that review published, and
- 4) there be a public referendum on new taxes.

It is the intention that these criteria for service delivery be applied in Cincinnati and other municipalities and townships as well as at the county level.

II. LWVCA members support special districts, contractual arrangements (both public/private and intergovernmental) and general-purpose government as appropriate means of service delivery.

Background: In 1986, determining that the chances for a major structural change in county government seemed remote, the LWVCA approved a study of alternative methods of service delivery in Hamilton County. Material for unit discussions on special districts (1987) and privatizing and contracting out of services (1988) led to consensus (April, 1988) on the criteria for judging new proposals for service delivery.

2009 County Government Committee Statement: As the BOCC scrutinizes the services that it provides within current budget constraints, this Position, adopted in 1988, is an important one for League reaction to possible County proposals.

Recommendation: RETAIN

Support of the Council/Manager Form of City Government for Cincinnati

Position: The LWVCA supports the council-manager form of government for the City of Cincinnati including:

1. Support for at-large election for City of Cincinnati council members using semi-proportional (weighted or cumulative voting) or proportional representation (that is, the single transferable vote) method of election,
2. Support of a nine-member council for the City of Cincinnati,
3. Support of a four-year term of office for members of Cincinnati's City Council including the mayor,
4. Support for separate, direct election of Cincinnati's mayor by majority vote on a non-partisan ballot at the general election. Support for the mayor as a regular voting member of council with such powers as would enhance the role of mayor as council leader within the council-manager form of government.

Background: The LWVCA has supported the council/manager form of government from the time of the adopting of the 1926 Home Rule Charter in Cincinnati. This position has been reaffirmed and enhanced numerous times in response to proposed changes in the city's governmental structure. Support for a nine-member council was added in 1982, and for an expanded description of at-large elections in 1993 (point #1). Most recently, in February 1996, League members developed a new position for the direct election of a 4-year term mayor with enhanced powers (see point #4).

2009 City Government Committee Statement: Discussion continues on different ways to elect council members. After previous failed attempts in 1988 and 1991, Proportional Representation (PR) was defeated again in November 2008. The League did not take a position on the 2008 PR ballot initiative because of concern for lack of widespread member agreement and understanding on the issue. District elections also are still being discussed. Cincinnati council members continue to have 2-year terms whereas the League supports 4-year terms. Possibilities for additional Charter Amendments include provisions for recalling

the Mayor, changing council salaries, and provision for council to meet in Executive Session.
Recommendation: RETAIN

Support of Independent Boards and Commissions in the City of Cincinnati

Position: LWVCA supports provisions in the Cincinnati City Charter for the existence of independent boards and commissions in the functional areas of parks, city planning, health, and recreation. The League also supports measures, which would make more effective the operations of the independent boards and commissions.

Background: This position was adopted in May 1990 following a study of the four boards and commissions in the city of Cincinnati commonly thought of as "independent" - the Park Board, Recreation Commission, Board of Health, and City Planning Commission. Each of these independent boards and commissions grew out of grassroots citizen initiatives that predated the city's Charter of 1924. League members agreed that independent boards and commissions are a unique tradition of citizen involvement in decision making in Cincinnati government and that they should be continued and strengthened.

2009 City Government Statement: Recent discussions have brought up talk of combining city parks and recreation departments; the possibility of combining city and county health departments; and the possibility of moving the health department under the city manager rather than under the Board of Health. The City Planning department now is under the City Manager but still has an advisory Planning Commission.

Recommendation: RETAIN

PLANNING

Support of Comprehensive Planning at the Municipal, County and Regional Levels

Position: The LWVCA supports the following criteria for evaluating planning proposals.

Such proposals should:

1. Be responsive and adaptable to changes;
2. Provide for citizen education and participation at all stages;
3. Consider social and environmental values as well as physical and economic development;
4. Be concerned with preserving historical and cultural assets of the local areas of the region;
5. Be fair and non-discriminatory, considering the welfare of the entire region rather than that of special interest groups;
6. Be able to be implemented under existing financial and political constraints, but allow for possible changes, e.g., changes in national or state laws, change in governmental structure, etc.;
7. Take into account the goals and priorities of all levels of planning (municipal, county), striving to avoid duplication and to promote compromise;
8. Be compatible with the established goals of the regional planning authority.

Background: LWVCA first became interested in land use planning in 1951 and has restudied and expanded its positions since then, arriving at the present statement in 1971. Meanwhile, land use became a concern of League members nationwide; in 1972 the LWVUS convention added a land use study item to its program. By 1985 we had a national consensus, now stated as "Action to support responsible management of our finite land resources and developed environment to ensure consideration of public interests and private rights."

Recap of past action: Beginning in 2002, League members participated in meetings that culminated in the development of Hamilton County Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategies (COMPASS), and LWVCA was an Associate member of the follow-up Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission Planning Partnership from 2004 – 2008. League

members participated in the OKI Land Use Commission meetings that resulted in the 2005 Strategic Regional Policy Plan for linking Land Use and Transportation planning. In 2007 – 2008 League members participated in meetings that lead to the formation of Agenda 360 A Regional Action Plan. The League and its members were part of these planning activities as means to implement the more detailed LWVCA Planning position in SUPPORT OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AT THE MUNICIPAL, COUNTY AND REGIONAL LEVELS. Point 8 links plans with the regional planning authority, OKI, which Strategic Issue 23 encourages local governments in the region to create up-to-date, consistent and coordinated comprehensive plans. The local League Planning position complements more general LWVO and LWVUS planning positions.

2009 Statement from City Government

Committee: Potential future action (pending League member interest and some additional (e.g., new to program involvement) member involvement): The LWVCA Planning position enables the organization and its members to promote planning locally and link planning to larger regional goals. Most immediately, the City of Cincinnati has begun a process to update the City Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendation: RETAIN

2009 County Government Committee Statement: This Position was adopted in 1971 and is viewed as an important League statement for many of the reasons cited above.

Recommendation: RETAIN

TRANSPORTATION

Support of a Publicly-Owned Transportation System for the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area

Position: The LWVCA supports the establishment of a public transportation agency, such as an authority or a district, on as wide a geographic base as feasible. The League prefers a nine-county base (Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana); the next most desirable would be a tri-county base; or at least one including all of Hamilton County. The LWVCA believes that local gov-

ernments share the responsibility to assure the existence of an adequate mass transportation system. The LWVCA supports public ownership of a mass transit system, and opposes subsidies to privately owned transit systems.

Background: Following studies in 1966-67 and 1972, the LWVCA arrived at the present support position on transportation. In 1969, the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) was created by Hamilton County. SORTA's area of jurisdiction is Hamilton County. However, under state law any contiguous county is permitted to join the transit authority upon a vote of its county commissioners. In 1972, enabling legislation was passed, allowing a vote on taxes for mass transit by individual townships and municipalities instead of on a countywide basis only.

Recap of past action: In 2001 League members participated in the Metro Moves Advisory Council and LWVCA supported the resulting 2002 Metro Moves Regional Transit Plan. Since the ballot issue seeking funds to implement the plan was defeated, League members have attended as observers the monthly SORTA (Southwest Ohio Regional Transportation Authority) Board meetings. League members have participated in OKI I-71, I-75, Western and Eastern corridor studies for transportation planning. Since 2007, League members have followed the deliberations regarding a Cincinnati Streetcar proposal. LWVCA opposed the November 2009 Issue 9, a proposed Charter Amendment to require a vote of the electorate before spending any monies on passenger rail improvements or right of way acquisitions because it would impede the development of adequate transportation for the city and the region in addition to cluttering the charter with an inappropriate amendment.

2009 Transportation Committee Statement: Potential future action (pending League member interest and some additional (e.g., new to program involvement) member involvement): Adequate transportation under Federal policy refers to multi-modal inter-modal transportation including bus, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and motor vehicle transportation. In the past 3

years, the political opportunity to implement regional transportation including rail has been evolving. The LWVCA Transportation position coupled with LWVUS Transportation position enables the League organization and its members to be actively involved in promoting the development of an adequate regional transportation system.

Recommendation: RETAIN

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Support of Different Techniques to Achieve Improved Integrated Education

Support of Policies and Programs Leading to Improved Educational Opportunity

Position: The LWVCA supports different approaches to achieve high quality integrated education for every child. Methods of desegregation that the LWVCA supports include: alternative schools, open enrollment, pairing of schools, redistricting. The LWVCA supports a program of educating the public for school desegregation. We support the League's participation in the desegregation plan. The LWVCA supports open enrollment in all Hamilton County area schools if there is no financial burden to the receiving district.

Background: The consensus on integrated education was reached in 1976 and reaffirmed in 1996. In February, 1984, the Cincinnati Public Schools, the NAACP and the Ohio Department of Education reached a tentative out-of-court settlement (approved by the court in June, 1984) ending ten years of litigation in the Bronson suit and avoiding a bitter court battle. In the Agreement the Cincinnati School District agreed to reduce racial isolation over the next seven years, using standards established by the Agreement, and was given the discretionary authority to select the methods of meeting that responsibility. In 2000 a proposal to restudy this position was defeated at Annual Meeting.

Recommendation: NO RECOMMENDATION FROM EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Cincinnati School District Tax Levies and Bond Issues

Position: For the Cincinnati School District: The LWVCA supports tax levies and bond issues to implement policies for operations and improvements in the system. The Board, in determining LWVCA action on a proposed Cincinnati Public Schools tax levy or bond issue, should consider the following information:

1. proficiency scores,
2. drop-out/graduation rates,
3. the spending per student,
4. the condition of the physical facilities,
5. the socio-economic background of the student body,
6. programs offered, and
7. student/parent satisfaction survey results.

The trends for these data should be that the district is showing improvement toward meeting its announced goals, and where progress is not being made, remediation efforts are in place.

In addition to the above information, the Board should examine the CPS budget to determine what monies are coming into the district and how they are being spent. Moreover, before any position is taken, the Board must be confident that the LWVCA members have been thoroughly updated on the state of the CPS and that their activities are being routinely monitored."

2009 Education Committee Statement: Recommendation: RETAIN

Support of All Prevailing Community Priority for Quality Education for Wyoming (Ohio) Students

Position: For the Wyoming School District: The LWVCA is in support of all prevailing community priority for quality education for Wyoming students:

- Continued emphasis on meeting the individual educational needs of all Wyoming students;
- Increased interaction between school and community to utilize citizen resources, both volunteer and
- Financing necessary to maintain the educational objectives of the WPSS;
- Capital improvements to preserve and en-

hance the educational facilities of the Wyoming Public School System.

Background: The LWVCA has studied the educational facilities of the Wyoming Public School System and as a result of the LWVCA Wyoming unit's study and evaluation (1971-74), updated in 1989 and again in 1999, it is felt that School Financing and General Fund Operating Budget reflect the community priority for quality education. The LWVCA supports the current high standard of budgeting and operation.

Recommendation: PDC RECOMMENDS THIS POSITION BE DROPPED OR RESTUDIED.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Support of the Little Miami River as a Scenic River

Position: The League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area supports the protection of the Little Miami River from its source to its mouth at the Ohio River in the State System of Scenic Rivers and in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.

- The LWVCA believes that continued action is needed to protect, maintain, and improve available water resources of the Little Miami River. Ground water recharge areas should be protected. Ground water that seeps into the river provides the base flow--the low flow that is sustained through the driest part of the year--and is an important source of public water supply. Citizen action is also needed to safeguard the ecosystem, some rare species of wild life, irreplaceable historic sites, and an open area for the recreational use of thousands of people.
- The LWVCA favors restrictions on any industry located in the flood plain of the Little Miami River through zoning restrictions and strict enforcement of present and future regulations.
- The LWVCA opposes any highway construction that threatens the future status of the Little Miami River as a State and National River, its ecosystem or its historic sites.

- After the Little Miami River is designated as Scenic or Recreational, the LWVCA favors seeking funds for its maintenance and administration from federal, state, local (government) or private sources, or a combination of them.

Action taken on position: Several years ago the Natural Resources Committee took an active interest in an Eastern Corridor plan to build a new bridge across the Little Miami River at the "Horseshoe Bend" area. The League position was helpful in giving us standing to request information about the project.

2009 Natural Resources Committee Statement: This position could guide action on future threats to the integrity of the Little Miami River as a Scenic River. Although many League members worked on the designation of the Little Miami as a Scenic River, these battles are never permanently won.

Recommendation: RETAIN

POSITIONS - HAMILTON-FAIRFIELD

Through the years, the LWV Hamilton-Fairfield Area conducted member studies, reached agreement and adopted the following local positions. Hamilton-Fairfield merged with LWVCA in Fall 2001. At the May 15, 2002 Annual Meeting, LWVCA voted to add the Hamilton-Fairfield positions to the LWVCA local program.

GOVERNMENT

Position: The LWVCA Hamilton-Fairfield Unit supports the charter form of government for the cities of Hamilton and Fairfield and the study of any proposed revision to said charters.

The LWVCA H-F Unit supports charter revisions for the city of Hamilton to provide for:

1. Four year rotating terms for members of council.
2. The assumption of duties of office by council members on the first Monday in December following the election.
3. The selection of Mayor by a majority vote of

the electorate. The person receiving the next highest number of votes should become Vice-Mayor.

4. A replacement procedure should a vacancy occur on council.
5. The council should have the powers to establish the salaries of council effective at the beginning of the succeeding term and to provide additional compensation for the Mayor beyond his/her salary as a member of council.
6. Separate law directors for the city and the Board of Education.

Recommendation: PDC RECOMMENDS DROPPING PENDING INPUT FROM THE HAMILTON-FAIRFIELD UNIT.

SOCIAL POLICY: Education, Primary and Secondary

Position: The LWVCA H-F Unit supports a sound public school system and the needed tax levies and bond issues for the operation and improvement necessary to reflect adequate long-range planning and high standards of programs academically, administratively, and financially for the school districts of Hamilton and Fairfield.

The LWVCA H-F Unit supports a sound vocational program that will:

1. Prepare students for available jobs in the community.
2. Prepare students for further formal education.
3. Provide transportation as needed.
4. Improve attitudes towards vocational education.
5. Encourage the formation of an advisory board to help develop and evaluate curriculum.

Recommendation: PDC RECOMMENDS DROPPING PENDING INPUT FROM THE HAMILTON-FAIRFIELD UNIT.

JUVENILE JUSTICE:

Position: The LWVCA H-F Unit, in conjunction with Oxford, supports countywide services for juveniles in Butler County to include:

1. Professional diagnosis and treatment of social, learning, medical and psychiatric disabilities.
2. Innovation and coordination of preventative and rehabilitative programs.
3. Provision for quality temporary care.

Recommendation: PDC RECOMMENDS DROPPING PENDING INPUT FROM THE HAMILTON-FAIRFIELD UNIT.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

Position: The LWVCA H-F Unit supports a public health program in Butler County that will:

1. Provide adequate financing for the control of communicable diseases, collection and recording of vital statistics, handicapped services, public and health laboratory services, health education for the general public and environmental sanitary control (The city of Fairfield contracts with Butler County for services.)
2. Supports a public health trained administrator as Director.
3. Encourage cooperative agreements or consolidation among other public health agencies at all government levels.

Recommendation: PDC RECOMMENDS DROPPING PENDING INPUT FROM THE HAMILTON-FAIRFIELD UNIT.