



October 25, 2020

Dear City of Spokane Council President Breean Beggs

Council Members Kate Burke, Michael Cathcart, Betsy Wilkerson, Lori Kinnear, Candace Mumm, and Karen Stratton,

League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area (LWVSA) supports the housing levy, 1590, which would increase Spokane's sales tax from 8.9% to 9.0%, costing only an additional \$16 per year per taxpayer to generate nearly \$6 million a year to provide needed assistance to our community. We urge you to consider passing this levy by December 15, 2020, to maximize the dollars our community can utilize.

This money would go directly to funding more necessary and affordable housing in our community. In a meeting of the Spokane Alliance on October 14, 2020, Rob McCann, CEO of Catholic Charities, who shared the stark reality of generational poverty in Spokane, attributed the cause to the lack of affordable housing. There simply are not enough affordable homes for veterans, seniors, and working-class families. The legacy of racism in housing through redlining, predatory lending and other discriminatory practices mean that our Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) neighbors are the most impacted by this crisis. Passing this levy could build up to 2,000 affordable new homes.

City council has been given authority by the Washington State Legislature to raise the sales tax by 1/10 of one percent. Those funds are to be used to fund affordable homes in Spokane for the 1500+ unsheltered in our city. Our city has proposed a bridge shelter to help those suffering from homelessness to transition to safe housing. How can our community expect our unsheltered to transition to safe housing if we have no housing available to meet their needs?

During the 2020 Washington State Legislative Session, the LWV Washington supported the adoption of HB 1590. The League of Women Voters believes that:

HO-1: All levels of government and the private sector share the responsibility to help alleviate the housing shortage in the low income sector. Identifying housing needs and planning to meet these needs is best done at the local level. The state should set minimum standards for safe and decent housing and provide for their enforcement. Policies should be formulated to allow for maximum use of available federal funding as well as encourage the participation of industry, business, local and nonprofit groups in meeting housing needs. The state government should provide information, assistance and coordination for housing programs at all levels. (1970)

The LWVSA urges you to pass this local housing levy by December 15 to maximize the opportunity the state legislature has provided our local government to address the housing crisis in our city.

In conclusion, League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area recommends the Spokane City Council pass the housing levy, 1590, to begin the process of developing affordable housing for the 1500+ people in our city who lack safe housing.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, we look forward to your response to our recommendation and opportunities to explain our position further if necessary.

Sincerely,

Ann M. Murphy

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LWVSA Co-President

Sylvia Oliver

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