



January 2024 Study Pages

Review of Local LWV Policy Positions

League of Women Voters advocacy is based on positions adopted after significant study. When a member or committee comes to the Board and asks that we speak out on a current issue, the first question is “What LWV position is it based on?” LWV policy positions exist at the national, state and local levels. Our advocacy can be based on any of these positions. For example, our Fair Districts advocacy is based on the National Redistricting Position. Our active Natural Resources Committee bases its advocacy on National and State Positions. Support for a Cincinnati charter amendment or Hamilton County levy is based on local positions.

Over the years, the list of positions has grown. Every two years, members are asked to review the positions and recommend whether any should be dropped or updated, or whether any new studies should be conducted to consider new issues. This year, we are reviewing both national and local positions. The LWVUS positions will be considered at a January 20 General Membership meeting. Units are considering the local Cincinnati Area positions at their January meetings.

Comments from the Units on the local positions will be considered by the LWV standing Program Development Committee, along with any comments from the Program Committees, e.g. Natural Resources, Education, City and County Government. The full membership will vote on the recommended 2024-2026 Local Program Positions at the Annual Meeting this spring.

The LWV of the Cincinnati Area currently has 10 local position statements which are printed in full below. The positions were each developed after a significant study by members. If a new policy is recommended, it would first be approved as a Study. Members recommending new positions are asked to commit to taking part in the Study.

Unit Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the 10 Local Positions have most relevance to Unit members? (For example the Warren County Unit would be more interested in the Regional Positions than in the Hamilton County Positions and if people do not live in the City, they would be less interested in the Cincinnati-specific Positions.)
2. Looking particularly at the Positions members mentioned in Question #1 as having most relevance, are any of the statements out-of-date and need to be updated or dropped?
3. Are there current issues that LWVCA could speak up and take advocacy on based on these Local Positions? What action would you recommend?

LWV Cincinnati Area Local Positions

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. Improvements and upgrades in programs offered;
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. Continuous outreach to parents and members of the community.

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.

The LWVCA supports criteria for Hamilton County-wide voted property tax levies.

A model tax levy process would include a committee of citizens with the authority to review tax levy proposals and tax levy recipient organizations and other criteria; reduction of the total number of voted levies without sacrificing needed services; timing that prevents placing all levies on a ballot at the same time; funding county services based on a determined level of need that balances funds, services and resources; funding broadly defined services that can respond to changing conditions and needs; provision of meaningful opportunities for citizen involvement, input, monitoring and review; assuring agency accountability to the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners; ballot language that is understandable to citizens and accurately describes services funded by the proposed levy.

The LWVCA supports comprehensive planning at the municipal, county, and regional levels.

The LWVCA supports these criteria for evaluating planning proposals - be responsive and adaptable to changes; provide for citizen education and participation at all stages; consider social and environmental values as well as physical and economic development; be concerned with preserving historical and cultural assets of the local areas of the region; be fair and non-discriminatory, considering the welfare of the entire region rather than that of special interest

groups; be able to be implemented under existing financial and political constraints, but allow for possible changes; take into account the goals and priorities of all levels of planning striving to avoid duplication and to promote compromise; be compatible with the established goals of the regional planning authority.

The LWVCA supports the council-manager form of government for the City of Cincinnati.

- 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;
- Support of a nine-member council for the City of Cincinnati;
- Support of a four-year term of office for members of Cincinnati's City Council including the mayor; and
- 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.

The LWVCA supports the modernization of Hamilton County government.

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":

- The county executive should be appointed by the county governing body.
- The county executive should have budgetary responsibilities and powers of policy execution and be directly answerable to the county governing body.
- Hamilton County governing body should have implied powers and some self-taxing ability.
- The county governing body should be elected in combination method including districts and at-large and should have 5-11 members.
- Means of citizen participation should be explicitly provided.
- Members of the county governing body should serve four-year, staggered terms.
- Means of citizen recourse should be explicitly provided.
- All county department heads should be appointed.

The LWVCA supports policies and programs that will lead to improved educational opportunity for every public school student.

The LWVCA supports different approaches to achieve high quality integrated education for every child.

The LWVCA supports independent boards and commissions in the City of Cincinnati.

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.

The LWVCA supports the protection of the Little Miami River in the State System of Scenic Rivers and in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.

The LWVCA 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. Groundwater 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.

The LWVCA supports a publicly-owned transportation system for the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area.

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 governments 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.

The LWVCA supports certain criteria for methods of service delivery.

The LWVCA supports criteria for service delivery in areas of relationships with other governments and service providers; accountability and responsiveness; taxes, fees and assessments; quality of service.

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

- In regard to relationships with other governments or service providers, service providers 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.
- In regard to accountability and responsiveness, there should be:
 - clear responsibility for planning and delivery of the service;
 - a clear line of recourse for unsatisfactory service;
 - preannounced open board or council meetings;
 - accountability to citizens through an elected official; and
 - annual financial and program reports readily available to the public.
- Elected officials should approve fees and assessments.
- 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:

- the service provision not be duplicated by another source;
- the proposal not have an adverse effect on prospects for change in county structure;
- annual financial and program reports be reviewed at state and local level with results of that review published; and
- 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.

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