



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF NEW ORLEANS LEAGUE ESSENTIALS

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SUMMARY JANUARY PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING (Deletions are underlined--additions or changes are in parentheses)

I. CITY GOVERNMENT

A.5.d. Provide guidelines which (that) allow public scrutiny to eliminate conflict or (of) interest, eliminate favoritism, and require competitive public bidding in awarding of public contracts (including professional service contracts).

RECOMMENDED CHANGE

A.5.u. Considering that New Orleans recently voted to limit terms of City council members, we oppose placing it on the charter revision ballot.

RECOMMENDED TO DROP THIS POSITION

B. 2. Tax base (authority) to allow city to determine its own fiscal future. (1981)

NON-RECOMMENDED CHANGE

More information is needed to determine if this change would accomplish anything different than the position stated in B.3.

Membership discussion identified several areas in the Program that warrant updated studies or informational meetings before changes or additions to the positions can be justified. These areas are:

I. CITY GOVERNMENT

F. URBAN ENVIRONMENT

3. The City of New Orleans should consider the contractual management of housing programs to nonprofit organizations/agencies with proven track records. (1989)

G. ZONING CHANGE PROCESS

- a. Re-examine the practice of enacting moratoria.
- c. Add another position addressing the role of City Council as it pertains to zoning law: the current "ad hoc" practices; is there a need for moratoria on "conditional use"; spot zoning; granting variances.

II. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

C. Constitutional protection for the Merit principle; details of the system provided for by statutes, not included in the constitution. Is there a need to retain this position?

VI. ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOLS

Proposal to form a new Education Committee. Areas needing examination by the Committee:

- Review the positions under section H. Primary focus on improving the basic educational unit--the regular classroom.
- Should we have a position supporting teaching assistants in the classrooms for disruptive students and students with reading difficulties?
- Should we have a position on provisional teachers?

Do we need a section K? Should all schools that receive any state or federal funds be held to the same standards as public schools in regard to standardized testing with published results?

President's Column

When I left Shreveport on the Monday morning after the state league convention, I drove through some of the stormiest weather of the season, but it could not compare to the stormy weather within the convention itself. Our league, in cooperation with the St. Tammany and Ruston leagues, addressed several important issues from the convention floor regarding how decisions are made, how delegations are counted, how money is spent, how program positions are honored and addressed, and who gets to lead the state's league for the next two years. While we extracted concessions on the necessity for majority approval of email voting by the state board and additional funds to support training-related travel, program use remains unresolved, delegate counts remain contentious, and none of the candidates supported by us were elected.

It is evident to me and to other board members that whatever issues we may have with other leagues and the current state leadership, the larger challenge we face is within our own league. With static membership, limited financial resources and uneven execution of events and activities, we are in need of a thorough reexamination of the who, why and how of the LWVNO through the development of a strategic plan along the lines that corporations of all kinds undertake to successfully achieve goals.

In the meantime, the board is moving on our more immediate needs: development of an operating budget and planning for the Annual Meeting (Saturday, June 4, 10 am at Bravo Restaurant). Also, the Nominating Committee has successfully completed the list of new officers and board members and—speaking purely objectively, of course—the list contains the most incredibly brilliant people in the league, if not the entire western hemisphere.

As anxious as these statements and predictions may make you, be assured that you will receive a newsletter that will clarify much (specifically the budget), and an invitation for the annual meeting. Nell Nolan of the Times Picayune will come to photograph and record names at this event, so I encourage you to attend. Not only will there be great Italian food, but we plan to have a member of the Louisiana Tax Commission address us about fair taxation. What can be fairer than that?

PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGES

The LWVNO Board recommends adoption of four by-law changes. Shortening the time period for submitting information to the membership prior to annual meeting will be a better fit for the calendar and publications. The current by-law is followed by the proposed by-law printed in italics.

ARTICLE VII--FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

Section 4. Budget Committee. A Budget Committee shall be appointed by the Board of Directors at least two months prior to the Annual Meeting to prepare a budget for the ensuing year. The proposed budget shall be sent to all members one month before the annual meeting.

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ARTICLE IX--NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Section 2. Report of the Nominating Committee and Nominations from the Floor. The report of the Nominating Committee of its nominations for Officers and Directors for full and partial terms as required and for the three members of the succeeding Nominating Committee shall be sent to all members one month before the date of the Annual Meeting.

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ARTICLE X-- PROGRAM

Section 3. b. The proposed Program shall be sent to all members one month before the Annual meeting.

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ARTICLE XIII--AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Amendments. These By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting at the Annual Meeting, provided the amendments were submitted to the membership in writing at least one month prior to the meeting.

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The City Government Committee has recently completed its reevaluation of the current positions of LWV-NO regarding the assessment system. The committee convened three general meetings to discuss the issues. We report the following discussions by the members attending these meetings, with a notation if the Committee has a different recommendation:

- (1) Revise the 1st position from “Professional reappraisal of all property” to “professional annual standardized appraisal of all property including exempt property”
- (2) Revise the 2nd position from “Publishing of property tax rolls” to “Integrate assessment information with the citywide GIS system to provide open access via the Internet” [Note: The Committee recommends the term “year round access” rather than “open access.”]
- (3) Retain 3rd position, i.e., “One assessor for Orleans Parish”
- (4) General consensus to retain the 4th position, i.e., “Assessor appointed,” though the members in one meeting indicated a certain ambivalence as to whether we should insist that the assessor be appointed, rather than elected. [Note: The Committee recommends retaining the current position.]
- (5) Revise the 5th position from “Qualified, professional assessor, meeting national standards” to “Assessor must meet standards set by International Association of Assessing Officers (or equivalent) for Appraisal Supervisor or Certified Assessor Evaluator”
- (6) Revise the 6th position from “Assessor's appraisal staff of civil servants with professional training” to “Assessor’s appraisal staff must meet professional assessment education standards and be under Civil Service protection with pay appropriate to training and authority”

In addition, one group recommended that the title be revised from “Measures to Improve the Assessment System” to “The Assessment System.” Another group recommended that the positions be reorganized as follows: 1, 2, 5, 6, 3, and 4.

The above issues will be discussed during the Annual LWVNO Meeting on Saturday, June 4, 2005.