

League of Women Voters of New Orleans

Local Positions 2005-2006

I. CITY GOVERNMENT

SUPPORT OF: Measures to maintain city government with a minimum of state control.

A. HOME RULE AND CITY CHARTER

1. Greater local control of city services presently under state control. ["local", 1980]
2. Equitable apportionment of council districts for New Orleans. [#1 and #2, before 1970]
3. Council elected by district and at-large. [1977]
4. Referendum on any revision of the City Charter. [1977]
5. The City Charter should ["should" 1999]:
 - a. Protect life, liberty, and property against government incursion, and enhance the quality of life; ["enhance the quality of life", 1987]
 - b. Ensure taxation with full public awareness;
 - c. Ensure that public money is spent and public property is properly disposed of only after full and public discussion;
 - d. Provide guidelines that allow public scrutiny to eliminate conflict of interest, eliminate favoritism, and require competitive public bidding in awarding of public contracts, including professional service contracts; [1977, 1999, 2005]
 - e. Improve efficiency in city services;
 - f. Retain the two-term limit for mayor; [1984]
 - g. Retain a balanced budget provision;
 - h. Contain an overall nondiscriminatory statement;
 - i. Retain an independent Civil Service system;
 - j. Assure preservation of the city's historic structures areas, trees, and open spaces; ["structures", 1999]
 - k. Contain no stipulated salaries; ["b" through "k", 1987]
 - l. Retain initiative and referendum provisions;
 - m. Require mandatory revision of the City Code at regular intervals;
 - n. Provide a finance section that assures the administration flexibility and conforms with generally accepted accounting principles as promulgated by the National Council on Governmental Accounting and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board;
 - o. Provide that the City Notary be appointed by the City Attorney;
 - p. Retain the unattached Board of Liquidation, City Debt, and the departments of Fire, Law, Finance, Civil Service and Police. The Mayor may create, change or abolish other ["other", 1999] offices, departments, agencies, boards and commissions, submitting an ordinance to the Council which provides a plan of city structure. A complete reorganization may not occur more often than once each mayoral term, but the plan may be amended with Council approval. Additionally, the Charter should specify that the City must provide for environmental protection, public works, and planning; ["l" through "p", 1987, amended 1990, 1999]
 - q. Retain provisions for charter review. Each 10 years, the Mayor, with City Council approval, shall appoint a commission of citizens for the purpose of review, revisions and/or rewriting the charter; [1990, amended 1999]
 - r. At least each ten years, the Mayor, with City Council approval, shall appoint a commission to review and update the master plan and city zoning law; [1990, amended 1999]
 - s. Place the Charter amendments on the ballot divided into logical sections, so long as everything in each section is germane to its topic; [1993]
 - t. If amendments to the Charter affecting elections appear on the ballot, they should be placed in a separate section on elections; [1993]

B. INCREASED SOURCES OF REVENUE

1. Metropolitan income tax and/or earning tax in preference to sales tax increases. ["earning", 1985] (Declared unconstitutional by the Louisiana Supreme Court, 18 May 1987). [before 1970]
2. Tax authority to allow city to determine its own fiscal future. [1981, "authority", 2005]
3. Municipal millage for the City of New Orleans. [1982]
4. State to have fiscal responsibility for state facilities in the city and for services provided to the state by the city. [1981, updated 2003]

C. MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM [Updated after study, 2005]

1. Professional annual standardized appraisal of all property, including exempt property.
2. Integrate assessment information with the citywide geographic information system (GIS) to provide open access via the internet. [#1 and #2, before 1970, "with access on the internet", 2003]
3. Assessor must meet standards set by International Association of Assessing Officers (or equivalent) for Appraisal Supervisor or Certified Assessor Evaluator. [Updated 2003]
4. Assessor's appraisal staff must meet professional assessment education standards and be under Civil Service protection with pay appropriate to training and authority.
5. One assessor for Orleans Parish. [Updated 2003]
6. Assessor appointed. [#3 through #6, 1982]

D. MUNICIPAL OPERATION OF LOCAL GAS AND ELECTRIC UTILITIES

(Update and review recommended)

1. Adoption of a least-cost energy policy by the City of New Orleans. [1988]
2. The regulation of Entergy/New Orleans and Entergy/Louisiana in Algiers should remain with the City Council. [1985, 1987, 2000]
3. The complete merger of Entergy/New Orleans and Entergy/Louisiana should be prohibited. [1985, 2000]
4. The decommissioning of Entergy/New Orleans' fossil fuel plants should be prevented. [1985, 2000]

E. CAPITAL BUDGET PROGRAM

Measures to ensure the City of a program that will allow it to build, rebuild, and renovate necessary capital items such as streets, bridges, police and fire stations, libraries, city buildings, and park and recreation facilities. [1987, "city buildings", 2003]

F. URBAN ENVIRONMENT

1. Measures to provide and maintain adequate and appropriate ["and appropriate", 1993] public recreational facilities, especially in areas of dense population. [1977, 1984].
2. Concept of preservation of green space and our urban forest [1993] on all publicly owned land. [1997].
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 [title, 1987]

Measures to increase opportunities for citizen participation in the zoning process through:

1. Increased requirements for advance notice to persons in the area of proposed zoning change; [1977]
2. Regular and adequate public notices of proposed changes; [1977] The City should adopt a Master Plan for the City of New Orleans that is more responsive to the City's land use needs and should fully revise the Comprehensive Zoning Law in accordance with that plan. In order to make the present zoning law more efficient and/or until the above recommendation is instituted:
 - a. Follow the procedures for amending the Comprehensive Zoning Law mandated by the Home Rule Charter and stop the practice of enacting moratoria as a means of regulating land use;

- b. Change the law pertaining to the jurisdiction of the Board of Zoning Adjustments, and specify the Board's jurisdiction to hear and decide appeals of decisions of the Director of the Department of Safety and Permits. [1990]

H. CIVIL SERVICE [1989].

New Orleans Civil Service should be continued as a system for government employees.

1. Mandatory management training and instruction in the careful use of evaluation and grievance procedures for middle and upper level administration, both classified and non-classified.
2. All city employees should be formally instructed regarding their employee rights under the Civil Service System.
3. All supervisors and administrators should be familiar with the Civil Service Grievance Procedure and should be required to use it.
4. The Civil Service Commission should have a regular monthly meeting time.
5. The section of government responsible for handling employee grievances should be housed outside City Hall.

II. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING [1973].

SUPPORT OF: Measures which regulate collective bargaining in the public sector including a limited right to strike with adequate provisions for mediation and arbitration.

- A. A single state comprehensive public labor/management relations law with local option covering all state and local employees.
- B. Public employees having a limited right to strike under the following conditions (police, firemen, prison guards could not strike under any condition):
 1. It be demonstrated that collective bargaining in good faith had taken place;
 2. Impasse procedures such as mediation and fact-finding had been completely utilized;
 3. A designated number of days had elapsed since a fact-finding board had made public its findings and recommendations;
 4. The union gives notice of intent to strike;
 5. If the strike endangers public health or safety, the court or regulatory agency could intervene;
 6. If arbitration is utilized, a strike is legal if the public employer or legislative body has failed to implement the arbitration award.
- C. Constitutional protection for the Merit principle; details of the system provided for by statutes, not included in the constitution.
- D. Adoption of a local ordinance or executive order setting forth a labor/management relations policy for city employees and establishing orderly procedures for administering the policy and dealing with disputes.
- E. Compulsory arbitration when impasse persists for employees forbidden to strike. [1982]

OPPOSITION TO: Unlimited right to strike by public employees.

III. JUVENILE JUSTICE [title, 1976]

SUPPORT OF: Measures to maintain a juvenile court system and ancillary facilities.

- A. Enlargement of the Youth Study Center as needed, including a sufficiently trained staff, and providing that only delinquent rather than neglected children are detained. ["sufficiently trained", 1984]
- B. Provision by the City of adequate housing for the court itself, including proper temporary holding quarters for children awaiting hearings. [A and B, before 1970]
- C. Administration of the court including a qualified judicial administrator and staff adequate in number and training. [1984]
- D. Selection of an administrative judge responsible for day-to-day matters, and reduction of vacation periods to one month. [dropped in 1984 but reinserted in 1986]
- E. A family court for Orleans Parish that meets accepted criteria for an adequate bench, in number and qualifications, staff, housing, ancillary facilities, and funding. [1976]

IV. TRANSPORTATION

SUPPORT OF: Measures to achieve a comprehensive metropolitan transit system.

- A. The establishment of a regional transportation agency with power to plan and provide for transportation services, including at least Jefferson and Orleans Parishes, with consumer representation. [1973]
- B. Riders, auto drivers, federal, state and local government to bear the cost of mass transit. [1982, "federal", 1993]

V. ORLEANS PARISH COURTS

SUPPORT OF:

- A. An efficiently administered court system; [1976]
- B. Merit selection of Civil and Criminal District Court judges, with a nominating committee composed of representatives from civic and legal groups and universities. [1973, "Civil" added 1986, 2000]

VI. ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOLS

SUPPORT OF: Measures to maintain a free public school system in Orleans Parish with improved communication between the public system and the community.

- A. School Board governance should meet the following criteria:
 - 1. A non-partisan Orleans Parish School Board; [Before 1970]
 - 2. Enlarged membership with a maximum of nine members;
 - 3. City government responsible for supportive services only - with no interference from city government in the academic affairs of the school system;
 - 4. Staggered School Board terms;
 - 5. School Board terms limited to two consecutive terms;
 - 6. The reduction of School Board terms from six to four years; [#2 through #6, 1978]
 - 7. School Board members elected from a combination of at-large and single member districts. [1981]
- B. An adequate counseling program; [1978]
- C. Continuing education for teachers and periodic review of classroom working performance as the basis for the continued employment of teachers; [1979]
- D. An administrative review of the evaluation procedure for awarding of teacher tenure to probationary teachers. [1979]
- E. An elective course in family living, including sex education be taught in the public schools. [1975, "sex education", 1979]
- F. Use of school facilities for recreational programs where needed and properly supervised; [1976]
- G. Periodic evaluation of the performance of the principals and administrators as the basis for continued employment; [1978]
- H. Primary focus on improving the basic educational unit - the regular classroom:
 - 1. Increase spending on direct instruction and, proportionally, decrease spending on administrative and business needs;
 - 2. Decrease class size;
 - 3. Provide for adequate and timely distribution of textbooks and materials;
 - 4. Minimize interruptions in the instructional year due to staffing changes and maintenance;
 - 5. Employ only certified teachers, teaching in their area of certification;
 - 6. Develop and implement alternatives to suspensions for disruptive students;
 - 7. Take steps to maximize parent involvement;
 - 8. Provide adequate heating and cooling;
 - 9. Purchase supplies and services in an efficient manner. [all of "H", 1987]
- I. The responsibility for education should be shared by schools and parents. [1983, 1987]
- J. Charter Schools [1999]

1. Charter school proposals submitted to Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) should be made readily available in a timely and public manner prior to the mandated public hearing.
2. A Citizens Review Committee, independent of OPSB, should review charter school proposals and make recommendations to OPSB.
3. A technical review panel, comprised of experts in financial, legal, and education strategy areas, should review the proposals for their area of expertise and be available to the Citizens Review Committee.
4. Members of the Citizens Review Committee should be provided a summary of the state law governing charter schools.
5. The recommendations of the Citizens Review Committee should be made public and available prior to the OPSB meeting to determine the outcome of the proposals.
6. Prior to renewing a school's charter, the public should be made aware of, and have access to, reports required in the state law.

VII. PRIVATIZATION OF GOVERNMENT ENTITIES (2001)

- A. Privatization of a government utility is justified only when it can be demonstrated that services will be increased or there will be an improved cost/benefit ratio, and these goals cannot be reasonably achieved within the existing structure.
- B. In the bidding and contracting process there should be policies to prohibit potential contractors and affiliated corporations from giving campaign contributions, providing jobs or loans, or contracting with public officials who are involved in the process, or their family members.
- C. The contract should provide for scheduled and periodic independent audits.
- D. Any private company operating public services must be subject to the public records laws.
- E. Following the transition, the government agency should fulfill the role of regulator, have sufficient expertise and staff to monitor the performance of the contractor, and manage the responsibilities that are not included in the privatization.
- F. Proposals for privatization of government services in Orleans Parish should meet certain criteria:
 1. The plan provides full cost information, including indirect costs, for both the privatization proposal and the actual cost of the government agency to provide the service;
 2. Civil Service Commission rules should be followed throughout any privatization process and the impact to employees clearly defined;
 3. There will be no diminishment in the quality of services delivered to the citizens;
 4. There is independent oversight of contract performance with measurable factors for evaluation and agreed upon periodic review;
 5. The working relationship between the privatized sector and the government agency is clearly defined in all aspects, including facility and equipment usage, access, and areas of responsibility;
 6. Sufficient competition exists from potential providers;
 7. Penalties for performance failure are clearly stated;
 8. There is a back-up plan if privatization fails.