

League of Women Voters of Cook County
ADVOCACY ANNUAL REPORT
2019-2020

During this past year your Cook County League has continued advocating our positions with several Cook County governments: Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), Cook County Government, and the Cook County Health System. We have been looking at budgets, meeting procedures, ethics ordinances, Shakman Decree compliance, consolidation of the Recorder of Deeds and Clerk offices, and performance of county departments and offices.

This advocacy has involved letters, emails, in-person testimony at government Board meetings, and personal phone calls and meetings with public officials and county department heads. We have been busy!

SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

MWRD: In January, we sent a letter and then in-person testimony before the MWRD Board regarding their new ethics ordinance. Our concern was that it would consider the League and other such non-profit organizations to be Lobbyists subject to a \$250 registration fee and reporting requirements. We proposed that this ordinance be more in line with that of Chicago and Cook County which exempts these organizations from those requirements. We were successful in getting that changed.

SHAKMAN DECREE: For years now, various Cook County Elected Offices have been under court-ordered decrees regarding the political and procedural methods used in hiring and promotions. We wrote a letter to the Commissioners on the Finance Subcommittee on Litigation requesting that hearings be held on progress toward compliance that the offices of Recorder of Deeds, Assessor, and Clerk of the Court have made. We gave updates and suggested questions to be asked of the Compliance Administrators and the Elected officials from these offices to be used at these hearings. Our questions formed the basis of the hearings. This is an on-going issue in the county and we will continue with our involvement.

CONSOLIDATION OF RECORDER OF DEEDS AND CLERK OFFICES: Last May, we sent a letter to the Cook County Commissioners reminding them that the merger of these two offices requires quarterly reports on the status of the merger.

We have also given verbal testimony and spoken with the Legal Counsel of the Recorder expressing our concern about the merger being effective, on time, and with benchmarks to be followed. Because this is to be completed by December, 2020, we will be following this closely in months to come.

BUDGET HEARINGS: For the October Budget hearings, we sent a letter with questions for commissioners to ask Department heads and Elected officials about their goals and accomplishments. These were then forwarded by Commissioner Daley to obtain written responses. All departments answered our questions. We also sent a letter to Commissioner Daley complimenting the positive changes in budget procedures over the past few years.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: In February, we met with the new Performance Management team at the County. We encouraged them to develop true performance indicators related to core missions of the department and to emphasize outcomes rather than outputs. Shortly after, we sent a letter to commissioners encouraging them to use the Key Performance Indicators in their roles of oversight of the County and the budget process.

HEALTH AND HOSPITAL SYSTEM: Continuing our goal of transparency, we have again pushed for live video taping of Hospital Board meetings. So far this has not happened, but we remain determined.

When I see all the areas your Cook County League is involved with, I am impressed and also encouraged that citizens can successfully work for positive change in our governments. If you would like to know more about what we say when giving testimony, please go to our website tab ABOUT for the latest advocacy. If you would like to join any of our Interest Groups or committees, please contact the appropriate person from the website or Cynthia Schilsky at cschilsky@comcast.net

Karin Hribar, Advocacy Chair LWVCC