**Public Comments of the League of Women Voters of Cook County**

**At the January 9, 2020 Meeting of the Board of Commissioners**

**Of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago**

Good morning Commissioners and staff. My name is Karin Hribar and I am here today representing the League of Women Voters of Cook County.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization which encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters of Cook County is composed of over 1800 members of 13 local Leagues within Cook County. We work together to educate ourselves and the public about the county-wide governments within the County of Cook, including the MWRD, and to improve the operations of those governments. All of us who work with the Cook County League are volunteers.

The Cook County League has been following the District’s efforts to strengthen its Ethics Ordinance, which the League supports. However, in looking at the draft language of the proposed amendments in December, the League became concerned that the League and other similar non-profit, non-partisan entities would be considered “lobbyists” and be subject to the registration, fees, and reporting requirements of the amended ordinance.

This would pose a considerable burden on the League and other similar organizations. We question whether any purpose is served by treating the League and other such organizations who contact you as “lobbyists” as defined in your ordinance amendments. In the case of the League, this could preclude us from contacting the MWRD in the future.

As far as we know, no government entity within Illinois considers the League and its members acting on behalf of the League to be “lobbyists” and subject to any registration, fee, or reporting requirements. We have provided to all of the Commissioners and the Executive Director the applicable language from the Cook County and City of Chicago ordinances which both clearly exempt entities such as the League from the definition of a “lobbyist.”

If the intent of the existing draft language of the ordinance amendments is to exempt entities like the League from the definition of a “lobbyist,“ we would ask that that language be identified and that when the Commissioners vote on the ordinance amendments that the Commissioners clearly state that intention on the record.

We urge the MWRD to not inadvertently discourage the League and other like organizations from fulfilling their missions with respect to the MWRD.

Thank you for your time and consideration.