

WHERE WE STAND - LWVCC

2023 Edition

Positions of League of Women Voters of Cook County

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WHERE WE STAND - LWVCC contains the current positions of the League of Women Voters of Cook County, and includes an appendix containing background and action taken for each position. When the League takes action in Cook County, *WHERE WE STAND - LWVCC* should be used in conjunction with *WHERE WE STAND*, published by the League of Women Voters of Illinois, *IMPACT ON ISSUES* from the League of Women Voters of the United States, and general League principles. For information on previous positions held and other LWVCC action refer to previous editions of *WHERE WE STAND*.

ACTION GUIDELINES

Action that affects more than one local League in Cook County or crosses county lines requires consultation with the Boards of the other Leagues in the area. Local Leagues or members should contact a member of the LWVCC or LWVIL Board if the proposed action falls into this category.

The LWVCC Board members communicate regularly with the Cook County Board of Commissioners and many governmental agencies within the county. Local Leagues should notify the LWVCC before lobbying the commissioners on an issue that has not come as a result of a Call for Action. This will give the LWVCC an opportunity to assist or advise local Leagues.

WHERE WE STAND LWVCC

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SUMMARY OF POSITIONS

COUNTY GOVERNMENT - Supports measures that improve the structure and function of Cook County government, including retention of single-member districts, separation of powers, a timely budget process, government transparency, inter-governmental cooperation, consolidation/elimination/creation of an elected body or position, and performance management.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE - Supports measures that improve adult corrections and the criminal courts, increase and improve diversion programs, and improve judicial sentencing and oversight of correctional facilities.

HEALTH CARE - Supports measures that provide public health facilities that are accessible to those who need services, and provides for citizen input in planning for health care with emphasis on cost containment and consumer involvement.

JUVENILE JUSTICE - Supports a separate juvenile justice system that protects the rights of all without discrimination; has the necessary staffing, programs and community support to be effective; is accessible; and provides for the secure detention of juveniles when necessary.

TOWNSHIP SCHOOL SYSTEM - Supports abolishment of the township school treasurers and trustees system within Cook County.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING SPECIFIC MEASURES

I. Principles and Goals

The League of Women Voters of Cook County promotes an open governmental system within Cook County that is representative, accountable, and responsive to its citizens. Further, the League believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of the citizens of Cook County in its government. Further, the League believes that an efficient and economical government within Cook County requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

II. Guidelines for Supporting Specific Measures

The League of Women Voters of Cook County supports measures that will achieve the goals listed above. In determining whether to support any specific proposal for Cook County government, the League will consider whether the proposal will likely result in some or all of the following:

1. Fulfillment of an appropriate role of county government
2. Improved service
3. Improved efficiency
4. Streamlined process
5. Reduced costs
6. Greater transparency
7. Greater accountability to the citizens
8. Increased likelihood of an informed and active citizenry
9. Increased likelihood of obtaining competent personnel
10. Adequate financing
11. Improved coordination among different governmental departments and entities
12. Achievement of other positions of the League

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

I. Cook County Districts

- A. The League of Women Voters of Cook County supports the current practice of electing the Cook County Board of Commissioners from single-member districts.
- B. To insure that citizens' interests can be adequately represented by their commissioners, each district should be drawn:
 - 1. To represent the fair distribution of population in accordance with the principles of one person-one vote.
 - 2. To respect equitable minority representation.
 - 3. To create compact and contiguous districts.
- C. To the greatest extent possible, districts should not divide established boundaries. The following should also be applied:
 - 1. Districts should not divide suburban municipalities.
 - 2. Within the City of Chicago, precinct and ward boundaries should be respected.

II. Separation of Powers

- A. The League of Women Voters of Cook County supports the separation of powers of the Executive and Legislative Branches of Cook County government, and promotes practices and principles that result in such separation. This policy includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - 1. The current 4/5 of the commissioners of the Cook County Board needed to override the President's veto should be reduced to a lower ratio or percentage.
 - 2. No member of the Legislative Branch should simultaneously hold a position, elected or appointed, in the Executive Branch.

III. Office of the President

The President of the Cook County Board should hold no other position, elected or appointed, within Cook County Government. The President of the Board should preside at the meetings of the Board. Major presidential appointments, including those to special districts within the county, should be done with the advice and consent of the Board.

IV. The Budget Process

The Cook County budget process should (A) be transparent, (B) be timely, (C) reflect oversight by the Commissioners of County departments throughout the year, and (D) utilize appropriate benchmarks for assessment. A process that reflects these attributes should lead to a better product that will benefit the citizens of Cook County.

V. Transparency

A policy of transparency should be implemented in all matters relating to the operation of the Cook County Government. This policy should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- A. There should be a comprehensive organizational chart that includes all elected officials and the governmental functions each administers, with the bureaus, agencies and departments under each elected official, and a listing of the top management positions and key employee positions under each elected official. Current organizational charts should be posted to the Cook County government internet site.
- B. There should be posted to the Cook County government internet site current information on Board Committees that includes: (1) each committee's responsibilities, (2) committee subject matter jurisdiction, e.g., the ordinances and issues that should be referred to each committee, (3) minutes, current and archived, (4) chair and committee members, and (5) meeting dates posted in advance of each meeting.
- C. All employee positions in Cook County should have a current job description stating the position duties and qualification requirements. The description should reference the applicable merit hiring law, if any; the unions, if any, that represent employees in each category of employees; and cross reference the applicable department on the Cook County organizational chart. The information should be posted to the internet.
- D. All Cook County ordinances should be codified upon adoption and made available on the official Cook County website. This includes any pertaining to the Forest Preserve District and to building codes, as well as all other ordinances.

VI. Intergovernmental Cooperation

There is a need for regional planning (metropolitan area, inter-county, county, or smaller units with mutual needs) and coordination of planning among governmental units.

VII. Elected vs. Appointed or Consolidation of Bodies or Offices

In considering whether there should be a consolidation of and/or elimination of an elected body or position, or the creation of a new elected body or position within Cook County (other than judges), the League will consider the following:

1. Whether the body or official makes public policy decisions, which would tend to be supportive of the need for election, as opposed to that body or official having mainly administrative duties;
2. Whether there will be significant cost savings as a result of consolidation or elimination of the elected body or position, or whether there will be significant increased costs as a result of creating a new elected body or position;
3. Whether there will be efficiencies that should lead to better service through elimination of overlapping responsibilities or duties and/or through improved communications between employees of the consolidated body or office;
4. Whether there is a need for a trained professional in the role now being elected;
5. Whether there is a need for the body or official to be independent of other elected bodies or officials;
6. Whether there is some other public interest being served by having a body or official accountable to the voters and/or by having the voters able to select the members of the body or the official through direct election.

VIII. Performance Management

The League supports the use of performance management system(s) by all elected and appointed officials in Cook County Government in order to improve the workings of the County for its citizens.

- A. Such performance management system(s) should set goals reflecting core missions and duties, results-oriented measures, and targets of achievement for individual departments and across related departments that need to work together to achieve desired results.
- B. Wherever appropriate, benchmarks and best practices from government entities and private industry should be utilized in setting goals and targets of achievement.
- C. Results should be reported at regular intervals (at least yearly), should be made available to the public in an easily readable format, and should be archived.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

I. Adult Corrections

- A. The Cook County Department of Corrections should provide adequate physical facilities.
 - 1. Inmates should be classified according to age, sex, degree of criminality etc.
 - 2. The Department's administration should have the authority to transfer inmates, including the mentally ill, to different appropriate institutions.
 - 3. The Department should continue to develop and administer:
 - a. Adequate rehabilitation programs
 - b. Facilities for medical care
 - c. Educational and vocational services
 - d. Religious counseling and guidance before and after release
- B. The Cook County DOC should operate under a unified administration.
 - 1. A nonpartisan Board of Corrections, knowledgeable in the field of corrections, should govern the department.
 - 2. A professionally qualified Executive Director of Corrections should be employed by the Board.
 - 3. The Department's employees, except for the Executive Director and his/her immediate assistants, should continue to be under a merit system of employment.
- C. The Department should administer and supervise a periodic imprisonment system with judges having the authority to commit misdemeanants to work-release sentences.
- D. In accordance with Illinois bail laws, the courts should make maximum use of release on recognizance. Judges should base their determinations on an adequate interview and verification system, which will assess if the defendant is reliable enough to appear for trial.

II. Criminal Courts

- A. A cooperative exchange of information concerning budget and planning should be made between the various components of the criminal justice system. Each component, including the courts, the probation department, the state's attorney's office

and the public defender's office, should strive to maintain individual integrity and independence.

- B. Annual reports that include statistical information such as that provided by the chief judge and the County Board should be readily available to the public.
- C. The criminal court, adult probation department, state's attorney's office and public defender's office should have adequate facilities and adequately trained personnel to operate in an effective and efficient manner.
- D. The state's attorney should be allowed to bypass the grand jury in criminal indictment cases, if appropriate. Grand juries should retain their investigative function. Illinois Statute has accomplished this.
- E. Public defender services should be extended to the arrest level, with defenders available on a 24-hour basis. In addition, defender services should be available to those who need them, with guidelines uniformly applied to determine indigence.
- F. Felony review screening procedures should continue in Chicago and Cook County suburbs. The screening procedures enable designated assistant state's attorneys who are called in by the police at the time of arrest to decide on the charge that should be brought against an arrestee or to determine whether the situation might justify dropping the charge altogether.
- G. While plea-bargaining may be a necessary evil in terms of speed, it does not serve the cause of justice. Illinois Supreme Court Rule 402, which lists specific procedures for conducting plea negotiations, should be followed scrupulously. Rule 402 requires that before a guilty plea may be accepted by the judge there should be assurance that the defendant is in fact guilty, has been afforded the advice of counsel, is aware of the rights being waived, understands the consequences of the plea, personally enters or is present when defense counsel enters the plea in court and realizes that the court is not bound by the agreement.

III. Diversion

- A. Pretrial and post trial diversion (alternatives to incarceration) programs should include adequate screening procedures for program participants, effective program guidelines, high quality and well-trained personnel and ongoing evaluation to ensure program effectiveness.
- B. Additional diversion programs should be established.
 - 1. Citation and summons should be used with explicit guidelines for the arresting officer.
 - 2. Drug abuse and alcohol abuse treatment programs should be promoted.

3. Police-social work teams that consist of social service units should be used. The units should cooperate with the police in misdemeanor cases that are largely psychological or social in nature, such as those involving runaways, as well as cases involving mental illness, family or marital problems, minor theft, drug abuse and vandalism.
4. Court employment programs that screen eligible participants and find jobs for them should be utilized. If a defendant succeeds in the program, his pending criminal charges should be dropped.
5. Comprehensive community-based corrections systems should be implemented. The system should develop community projects offering alternatives to traditional penal institutions. The projects may include a good release-on-recognition program, a comprehensive and well-administered probation department and work and education release programs. All such programs should be kept in the community.
6. Intensive intervention should exist that offers greater supervision and guidance than traditional probation programs. This is a community alternative to institutionalization that can take many forms, including foster homes, guided interaction programs and intensive community treatment.

IV. The League of Women Voters also favors the following:

- A. Uniform procedures and criteria should be adopted for sentencing. Judges should be required to give reasons for their sentencing decisions.
- B. Sentencing councils and institutes should be established.
- C. Judges should make mandatory visits to correctional institutions.

HEALTH CARE

I. Public health care facilities in Cook County should:

- A. Provide full service care to the medically indigent
- B. Ensure accessibility of ambulatory care
- C. Stress preventive health care including health education
- D. Serve as teaching institutions
- E. Offer access to specialized services when necessary

II. Planning

- A. Availability and accessibility of necessary health care should be planned according to need and with citizen input.
- B. Public health departments should determine the services they provide after assessing community needs.

III. Cost Containment

Costs should be contained, where possible, through sharing of equipment and eliminating duplication of facilities.

IV. Consumer Involvement

The League supports:

- A. Encouraging consumers to assume responsibility for their own health, assessing the costs of their own health care, and assisting in improving community health.
- B. Providing access to information on available health programs and facilities, including those for substance abuse treatment.
- C. Health education that encourages consumers to take action to prevent illness by emphasizing the benefits of good health.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

I. Juvenile Court

The Juvenile Court should be a separate division within the Circuit Court.

II. Jurisdiction

- A. All juvenile cases requiring court action should originate in Juvenile Court except for traffic offenses and other cases punishable by fines rather than incarceration. The Juvenile Court Judge should initiate the procedure if a juvenile is to be transferred to Criminal Court.
- B. Truancy should be met with action by the schools, with possible referral to other community resources.

III. Rights

Juveniles whose cases call for a judicial determination of legal rights and issues should be provided with clearly defined safeguards established by law for the protection of their rights and the rights of their parents. Safeguards should include:

- A. The right of parents and guardians to be notified as soon as possible that the child is held petition is being filed and the specific content of the petition (the alleged delinquent act if it is a delinquency petition).
- B. The right to representation by counsel and the provision of counsel when the family is unable to pay.
- C. The right to have proceedings handled expeditiously, reflecting a child's concept of time.
- D. The right to appeal.

IV. Discrimination

There should be no discrimination of any kind in the Juvenile Justice System in Cook County. This may include but is not limited to discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, and should apply to everyone who is involved with the juvenile jus-

tice system, and the juveniles themselves.

V. Ensuring Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Juvenile Court depends upon judicial leadership, professionally qualified administrators, effective staff, an array of programs and services, adequate public financing and community support and involvement.

A. Administration

In order to carry out its responsibility, the administration should include:

1. Effective staff, professionally supervised, appointed only on the basis of accreditation and certification standards.
2. Recruitment, selection and provisions for staff which includes tenure and removal for cause with right to a hearing.
3. Comprehensive pre-service and in-service training programs.
4. Pay commensurate with required qualifications, adequate office space, administrative support and county standard travel allowance.
5. Optimal standards for caseloads, based on the highest national standards.

B. Programs

In order to carry out its mission, the court system should have available:

1. An array of appropriate programs to meet individual needs.
2. Effective supporting services, including social case work, psychological and psychiatric services.

C. Community Support

There should be citizen input and community involvement within the juvenile court system.

VI. Accessibility

Juvenile court administration should be centralized in order to ensure uniformity of justice, standards, procedures and caseloads. Its facilities, such as courtrooms, monitoring centers, and reporting centers serve children and their families more effectively when they are decentralized.

D. Facilities should be located in areas of high incidence of referrals, with consideration to accessibility in suburban areas.

E. Facilities should be close to public transportation and expressways, with adequate parking nearby.

F. Each facility should be fully staffed to provide a full range of services.

VII. Detention

- A. The Juvenile Temporary Detention Center [TDC] should be used for the secure detention of juveniles, when necessary.
- B. Determination whether to hold a juvenile in secure detention should be based on the highest nationally recognized standards, e.g. for the protection of the juvenile or the community.
- C. Alternative programming should be available for juveniles who do not need secure detention.
- D. Appropriate programming should be available for juveniles held in the TDC.
- E. The TDC should meet the highest national standards.
- F. Juveniles awaiting trial as adults should be detained at the TDC.
- G. The TDC should be administered by an agency that administers juvenile detention facilities, not adult institutions.

TOWNSHIP SCHOOL SYSTEM

I. The League of Women Voters of Cook County finds the following to be true:

- A. The Boards of Education of suburban Cook County are more accessible and accountable to the community than are the officials of the township school system. Governance of financial administration by a seven-member Board of Education that meets at least monthly is more efficacious than governance by a three-member Board of township trustees required to meet only quarterly.
- B. The school township is no longer a suitable unit for the administration of school finance.

II. Therefore the League of Women Voters of Cook County advocates the following:

- A. That the Township School Treasurers and Trustees System be abolished in suburban Cook County.
- B. That individual school Boards in suburban Cook County have control of their own districts' finances.
- C. That individual school Boards have the duties, responsibilities and powers of the Boards of township school trustees.
- D. That individual school Boards thus have the power to appoint their own school treasurers, who would be directly responsible to the school Board.
- E. That appointed school treasurers have the same duties, responsibilities and powers as the township school treasurers.
- F. That appointed school treasurers in suburban Cook County be permitted to serve more than one school district.

Appendix A: Background and Record of Action on Positions

County Government

Background - In 1972, at Convention, the LWVCC adopted a government study which had been expanded from an earlier study authorized by the 1971 Interim Council to study the office of the county executive or president. From the mid 1970s the LWVCC had the position of single-member districts in Cook County which became a reality via a referendum in 1994.

At the Annual Meeting in 2005, LWVCC approved a study of the structure of Cook County government with emphasis on the balance of power between the commissioners and the Board president, and a study of the budget process of the Cook County Board. Based on the studies, changes to the position were approved and a study of employment practices in Cook County was approved at the Annual Meeting in 2007.

Intergovernmental Cooperation was an independent position first adopted in 1965. The study of intergovernmental cooperation grew out of recognition of problems common to the whole area and out of the League's interest in governmental structure. This position was condensed and integrated into the County Government position at the Annual Meeting in 2009.

At the 2015 Annual Meeting, the LWVCC adopted a position on Performance Management that resulted from an LWVCC study of the (STAR) Performance Management System in use within the Cook County Presidents's Office.

Action

1990s: In December 1990, the Government Reform and Improvement Project (GRIP), a joint effort between the LWVCC and Roosevelt University's Institute for Metropolitan Affairs, issued its findings on problems endemic to the operation of the county government. In 1991, the LWVCC members were invited to participate in various blue ribbon committees formed by the newly elected officials. Topics included voter registration strategies, budgets and reorganization efforts. In October the LWVCC and the Cook County Court Watchers produced televised debates on WTTW Channel 11 for the offices of president of the County Board, sheriff and state's attorney.

Early 2000's: The LWVCC testified before the County Board on such issues as better budgeting procedures. The LWVCC observed and reported on meetings of the County Board and members met with individual commissioners to lobby them on adopted positions. The LWVCC served as a resource on county government and Board members were often contacted by journalists, candidates, researchers and voters who had questions. The LWVCC participated in voter registration and candidate forums. The LWVCC published regular updates of *Who Represents Me? - Suburban Cook County*. The LWVCC published the *Observer*, reporting on the proceedings of elected and appointed regional boards and councils.

2002: The *Observer* became an on-line publication on the LWVCC website.

2005: LWVCC published the last edition of *Who Represents Me? - Suburban Cook County*. It was discontinued the following year due to dwindling sales.

2005-2007: The LWVCC completed 2 studies - one of the Structure of Cook County Government and one of the Cook County Budget Process. Presentations of the information were given to the local leagues and the public, and the studies resulted in committee consensus on the County Government position that was approved at the Annual Meeting in 2007.

2007: All the Cook County Commissioners were sent information on our newly adopted budget process position and several were lobbied by league members. Testimony was presented to the Cook County

Board in July about the appointment of the Budget Director and in November at the Public Hearings for the 2008 budget.

2007-2009: The Employment Practices Study Committee, in October of 2008, released its report “Where Does Cook County Spend Our Money?” The report focused on the allocation of employee positions and funds among the units of Cook County government using the Cook County organizational chart as a base for presenting the allocations. In March of 2009, the committee presented the report and information on employment practices to local leagues and the public.

2010: The Budget and Structure Interest Group within the LWVCC was formed to continue discussing and studying various aspects of Cook County government. Through this group, the Cook County budget process has been monitored on a yearly basis. In meetings with the administration and commissioners, LWVCC advocated for a more timely process for budget completion – before the end of the fiscal year – and adequate time for review. LWVCC focus on transparency resulted in changes in Cook County Board meeting procedures such as video streaming and archives of board meetings, making them available to the public. Website improvements in various county departments were the result of meetings with elected officials and staff.

2010-11: In March of 2011, the Special Purpose Fund Study Committee released its report which analyzed the special purpose funds in the Cook County budget. Through meetings with the Cook County Commissioners and the Administration, LWVCC was able to raise awareness of these funds and their use.

2011-12: The LWVCC actively monitored and testified with regard to the redistricting process for the Cook County Commissioner districts. This continues to be a concern of LWVCC.

2012-13: The Budget and Structure Interest Group studied the issue of elected vs. appointed government officials, consolidation and /or elimination of an elected body or position in county government, and creation of newly elected positions in county government. As a result of the study at the LWVCC Annual Meeting in 2013 an addition to the County Government position in Where We Stand – LWVCC and the addition of the section entitled General Principles and Guidelines for Supporting Specific Measures were approved by the membership.

2013: An updated power point presentation of “Cook County Matters” was developed and offered to local leagues and community groups to educate the public about Cook County.

2013-15: The STAR Performance Management Study Group investigated the procedures and process of the performance management system used within Cook County government, interviewed the Chief Performance Officer on several occasions, and also observed a departmental review that culminated in a position on the utility of performance management within Cook County government.

2014-15: Testimony, both oral and written, has been presented to the Cook County Board regarding length and frequency of Board meetings, rules and transparency procedures, amendment substitution, and use of Board committees. As a result of our testimony, several changes to public testimony, committee report voting, ordinance substitutions, and website format were made.

2015: The STAR study group published and sent the full study results, recommendations and League position regarding the performance management system (STAR) to all commissioners, county elected officials and relevant county personnel.

2016: Budget and Structure group studied the issue of Consolidation of the Recorder of Deeds with the office of County Clerk. Using our WWS criteria, we found in favor of the consolidation. Before the referendum vote, LWVCC provided voter information in the form of written materials and oral presentations. This referendum passed.

We also testified in favor of moving the Cook County Board consent calendar to a non-Board meeting day to provide more time for actual Board business (passed). We continue to be actively promoting performance-based management and its implementation and use by Commissioners.

2017-20: Budget & Structure group continued to monitor progress and have advocated for the required periodic reports on the consolidation of the Clerk and Recorder offices that is to take place by December 2020. We have provided questions and comments to Commissioners in their oversight of the consolidation. The Budget & Structure group successfully advocated for periodic meetings by Commissioners with the compliance administrators and representatives of the Assessor, Clerk of the Court, and Recorder on their progress moving toward compliance with Shakman Decrees. Several of our recommendations for budget hearings have been incorporated by the CC Board and suggested questions from the League have been asked. Over the past several years, the group has met with every new Performance Management department, providing suggestions to them and asking Commissioners to use performance management (when/if effectively developed) as an oversight tool.

2021-23; The Budget and Structure Interest Group spearheaded the following actions:

- LWVCC sent testimony letters to Cook County officials regarding filling of Board vacancies and Board salary increases; ethics violations and Inspector General reports; mismanagement, redistricting, and use of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Federal government.
- We were successful in promoting that Inspector General reports be put on Board agendas so they could be discussed publicly, showing how important these reports are and urged the Board to take appropriate steps to see that departments respond promptly to recommendations made by the Inspector General following an investigation .
- We opposed having more reports submitted directly to committees; rather we supported retaining the process of submitting reports to the Board for referral to committees, thus retaining the additional time to review those reports.; We promoted providing for elections to fill vacancies on CC Board and other elected officials when the remaining term of the office is more than 28 months; and salary increases for all the county elected officials who had not received increases for 20 years. However, in conjunction with those salary increases, we opposed perpetual yearly cost-of-living increases beyond the initial 4-year term without further periodic review and affirmative votes by the Board. While the ordinance still calls for perpetual yearly cost-of-living increases, in response to our opposition, the Board also passed an ordinance calling for review of the salaries at the end of the 2nd full year of the term to see if further adjustments, including modification of the cost-of-living increases, should be made .
- We sent letters and discussed with Board members urging that the County (with Board oversight) set forth what it expects to achieve through each of the ARPA programs and how their effectiveness is to be measured. League supported the CC Clerk's proposal to merge precincts in the same polling place which would result in decreased voter confusion, increased likelihood of having enough precinct judges and a reduction in expenses. Regarding the 2020 redistricting of CC Board districts, we stated the long-held League position that this be done by an independent commission, transparent process, and less dividing of communities of interest. This was not followed by the Board..

Forest Preserve District

2022-23; CC League members helped to pass the Forest Preserve tax increase referendum in the 2022 election. An interested group of members worked to promote the needed tax increase by holding guided walks in the Forest Preserves; provided speakers and information to all local Leagues. This referendum passed and the increase will go to protecting wildlife habitat, purchase of more land, minimize flooding and increase pension payments.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

2017-20: Within the Budget and Structure group, several members have begun observing MWRD Board meetings and reporting on our website. We testified in favor of a change to Lobbyist language on the new Ethics ordinance, which we supported. We also spoke in favor of establishing an Inspector General func-

tion for the MWRD. This has since been subcontracted to the IG of Cook County. Several members questioned Commissioners and other officials regarding the Canal Shores annexation proposal. As of now, this is still on hold.

2021-23; League urged MWRD to move executive sessions from the middle of their meetings to the end in order to use a “best practice” for Boards. This helps viewers and staff use their meeting time more effectively by not waiting unknown amounts of time for executive sessions to end. We continue to monitor MWRD Board meetings and interact with Board members regarding transparency and effectiveness of their procedures.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

1990s: The LWVCC monitored activities of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC).

2001: League members acted as facilitators to a NIPC project, Common Ground, which involved the six county Chicago region, in developing a shared vision for the future. NIPC also asked the League to make a list of issues and problems that were important in the community.

Criminal Justice

Background: Since its founding in 1923 The League of Women Voters of Cook County has followed the administration and activities of the courts and jails in Cook County. Over the years, the LWVCC has often teamed up with local Leagues, the LWV of Chicago and the LWVIL to focus on issues or legislation concerning criminal justice. In addition to sponsoring workshops and seminars on issues of concern about the jail, the LWVCC has also scheduled regular tours of the Cook County Jail.

Action:

1990: The LWVCC testimony at the County Board budget hearings applauded the adoption of pretrial screening which the League had advocated since 1960 and the inception of an electronic monitoring program to ease overcrowding in the jail.

1990: In October the LWVCC, based on the LWVIL’s government position supporting merit selection of judges, opposed a bill establishing 15 judicial sub-circuits. The bill passed, however, and the Governor signed it into law in December 1990.

1990: The LWVCC and LWV of Chicago co-sponsored a workshop on the new Cook County Department of Community Supervision and Intervention. The LWVCC also sponsored a workshop on overcrowding in jails, which drew considerable attention when one of the featured speakers, Federal Judge Milton Shadur, related the overcrowding problem at the jail to the war on drugs.

1991: The LWVCC was invited by the Chair of the County Board’s Law Enforcement to join a committee to review various Cook County criminal justice issues. The League also served as liaison to the Cook County Court Watchers and the Illinois Bar Association Bench and Bar Committee and worked with judges and lawyers to improve communication between judges, bar associations and citizens.

1991: The LWVIL requested that the LWVCC name a representative to the Illinois State Bar Association’s Gender Bias Implementation Committee. When that committee’s task was completed, a new Gender Equality Committee was formed to address sexual inequities in the courts, and the LWVCC participated in it throughout 1992-93. The League member was the only lay representative on this committee, all the others being judges and lawyers. In 1992, the committee identified gender bias in several areas of the judicial system, and in 1993 the League worked on a subcommittee writing a Court Conduct Handbook.

1992: The LWVCC participated in a study committee consisting of judges, bar association members and elected officials to determine the feasibility of supporting merit selection of judges as opposed to electing judges through partisan elections. The committee suspended its work to allow time to evaluate the new sub-circuit judicial system, which was instituted for the 1992 primary.

1993: The LWVCC and LWV of Chicago co-sponsored a workshop on rehabilitation.

1996: The LWVCC and LWV of Chicago co-sponsored a workshop on coming changes in incarceration

1997: The LWVCC sponsored a workshop on the needs of incarcerated women and also arranged for a tour of the women's jail.

1997-99: The LWVCC was asked by the Cook County Board president to participate in the work of the Committee on the Courts for the 21st Century, which was to study the needs of the court system. The League co-chaired the Public Awareness Subcommittee, which held public meetings and published the report on the Illinois State Bar Association and Chicago Bar Association web sites. The committee concluded its study of the needs of the court system and presented its findings to President John Stroger on Nov. 1, 1999.

2004-2005: The LWVCC had an observer at the Board of Corrections meetings and sponsored a tour of the women's section of the jail.

2005: The LWVCC testified before the Law Enforcement Committee of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County at a meeting to discuss the Extended March 2003 Grand Jury report (informally known as the Hett report) regarding the conditions at Cook County Jail. The League testified that they recommend and support any changes which would make the Board of Corrections non-partisan answering to the Cook County Board of Commissioners and independent of the Sheriff's office; and give the Board of Corrections power to monitor inmate grievances.

2014-15: A revived interest group on Criminal Justice formed to study the pre-trial aspect of the Cook County Criminal Justice System. An evaluation of pre-trial procedures and processes focused on high incarceration numbers, mental health of defendants, bail/bond procedures, system cost, effectiveness and fairness of the process. Key stakeholders throughout the system were interviewed, along with lawyers, professors and organization leaders knowledgeable about the Criminal Justice system. Visits to Cook County Jail and Bod Court were made by interest group members.

2015-16: The Criminal Justice Interest Group completed a report on Pre-trial Systems in Cook County. We promoted 11 recommendations, currently concentrating on elimination of cash bail, use of the Public Safety Assessment and the use and effectiveness of diversion programs for defendants. We continue to attend Bond Court and interview stakeholders to check on changes recommended throughout the Pre-trial system.

2017-19: The Interest Group revisited our Pre-trial Systems report from 2015 and gave updates regarding our 11 recommendations. This new report was sent to all CC Commissioners. We continue to follow any progress regarding bond court procedures, electronic monitoring, release of defendants on bail, diversion programs, and Public Safety Assessment validity and reliability.

2020-23; The LWVCC Criminal Justice Interest Group has urged the President and CC Board to consider the Justice Advisory Council's report on Electronic Monitoring (EM). Many recommendations for this program are considered sensible and worthwhile. Among these are combining the two EM programs and assessing the validity and reliability of EM programs. This group continues to monitor the criminal justice system in Cook County and follow how the changes made through the SAFE-T Act are being implemented. In 2022 the League worked with the Civic Federation, which issued a report on the bail proceedings prior to the Pre-Trial Fairness Act going into effect. In 2023-24, the League partnered with the Civic Federation again to observe how the Cook County criminal courts were implementing the Pre-Trial Fairness Act which went into effect in Sept. 2023.

Health Care

Background: In 1970, at Convention, The LWVCC adopted its first health position, to study general health standards. Consensus on standards was reached in 1972 and on public hospitals in 1979. In 1978, the LWVCC adopted a study of public health services in Cook County, with emphasis on needs assessment and involvement of consumers in the process of health planning. Consensus on Health Systems Agencies was reached in 1980 and on public health departments in 1981. In 1994, the LWVCC updated its position on Cook County Hospital and how it interfaced with private hospitals. In addition, area hospitals were surveyed to determine problems with reimbursement for the care of uninsured and underinsured patients. In 2009 the Health Care position was reviewed, consolidated, and edited.

Action:

1980's: The LWVCC encouraged the County Board to: 1) build some type of new county hospital; 2) provide neighborhood clinics where needed; and 3) examine other options such as taking over private hospital buildings that had been closed. The LWVCC gave testimony to Cook County Health and Hospitals budget hearings asking that the new building be part of a comprehensive plan for health care for those in need in Cook County and emphasizing prenatal and delivery care. Plans for and progress of the construction of a new hospital were closely monitored through the 1990s.

1987: The LWVCC Task Force evaluated health care delivery for those in need in the County and published and widely disseminated its *County Hospital Report* after acceptance by the 1988 Convention. In 1990, the LWVCC testified to the Health Care Policy Steering Committee, urging intergovernmental cooperation in drawing up a comprehensive plan for improving health care.

1990: The LWVCC adopted a study of substance abuse programs for pregnant women in Cook County. The LWVCC published its *Task Force Survey of Substance Abuse Programs for Pregnant Women in Cook County* in 1991.

1999: The LWVCC opposed SB 579, the Illinois Managed Care Consumer Bill of Rights.

2008-2009: The LWVCC had observers attend the newly formed Health and Hospitals System Board (HHS Board) meetings and committee meetings and wrote observer reports that were published on the LWVCC website.

2012-13: An Interest Group focused on Cook County Health and Hospitals System formed and continued to attend CCHHS Board meetings as well as committee meetings and write observer reports. The group is monitoring the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in the CCHHS.

2014-15: The CCHHS Interest Group continues to attend CCHHS board and committee meetings, posting reports on the LWVCC blog. Focus is on monitoring the changes being implemented to increase patient satisfaction so newly insured patients will continue to use the County's hospital system when other options are available.

2016-17: Interest Group (IG) began monitoring the progress of Medicaid Managed Care Program (County Care) for financial viability and membership retention. Hosted programs on "How Sustainable is the Cook County Health & Hospital System?" and CCHHS Board President, Hil Hammock on direction of health care at the County. IG produced slide presentation on CCHHS for presentation to local Leagues and community groups.

2018-19: Prepared questions on CCHHS for Cook County Board's annual budget hearings and attended special hearings prompted by a critical Inspector General Report on financial accounting practices of the

CCH's Managed Care program (County Care). Met with various CCHHS directors and also with CEO to advocate for live streaming and video coverage of CCHHS board and committee meetings.

2022-23; LWVCC sent a joint letter with the Civic Federation to the Cook County Health Board urging them to continue live streaming and video taping of its Board meetings which was begun during COVID. These meetings are now live-streamed and recorded for post-meeting viewing on You-Tube.

Juvenile Justice

Background: The first LWVCC comprehensive study of the Juvenile Court and detention home was done in 1962 and was preceded by many years of looking at various aspects of juvenile justice from the building of the Arthur J. Audy Home in 1923 through a focus on the age of criminality in the 1930s to an analysis of law enforcement agencies in the 1950s to a decisive role in the provision of a county shelter care facility (Herrick House in Bartlett).

Some of the recommendations from the 1962 study were included in the 1965 Juvenile Court Act.

In 1968, after a two-year study, The LWVCC reached consensus calling for the decentralization of the Juvenile Court and separation of the detention home from any agency administering adult institutions. A mini-study was authorized in 1974 with consensus in 1976 that focused on the governmental jurisdiction of the detention home and the types of juveniles who should be housed there.

In 2007 the Annual Meeting authorized a study to update the Juvenile Justice position, and in 2008 an updated position was approved. Updating of the position involved removal of some outdated sections from the position. The approved position emphasized citizen involvement and community support, included programming concepts, increased emphasis on standards, and became generally more child focused.

Action:

Other actions: Testimony before the Cook County Board of Commissioners on funding for probation staff, guardians ad litem and diagnostic services; advocating adequate number and compensation of public defenders; and establishing a program on truancy for community referrals with the use of the court as a last resort. Members have helped with surveys of local police procedure, served on advisory boards, lobbied for maintenance of existing shelter care facilities, etc., and opposed bills cutting funds for Department of Children and Family Services.

Township School System

Background: League members had conducted studies of the Township School System at the local level since the 1960's. In April 1982, the LWVCC adopted a study of the township school trustees and the township school treasurers, together known as the township school system. As a result of the study the LWVCC published *The Township School System: A Committee Study Guide* that contained information on the history and operation of the system, and the relationship of the officials with local school boards and the Educational Service Region of Cook County. The study resulted in a consensus and the Township School System position in March 1983.

Action:

1960s to Present: Local Leagues have studied individual treasurer's operations.

1990: The LWVCC initiated a Call to Action to Local Leagues asking them to urge their state representatives to support legislation to abolish the Township School Treasurers and Trustees system.

2004: LWV of Oak Park/River Forest initiated an Action Alert in support of HB0755 which would permit school districts with 5,000 to 7,000 students and defined boundaries to withdraw from jurisdiction and authority of trustees, provided that school boards immediately appointed their own school treasurers.

2019: The LaGrange League has taken up this issue with the local Township Treasurer office to try to disband the office according to LWVCC position.