

# League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area

## Agenda for Action – Public Policy Positions

### October 30, 2013

#### **Form of government for City of Columbia – City Manager-Council or Strong Mayor**

LWVCA does not support either a council-manager or a mayor-council form of government in preference to the other. LWVCA does support programs and policies that ensure a municipal government functions effectively, regardless of form.

LWVCA supports:

1. Development of a plan for the present and a vision for the future, a road map;
2. Assurance that the policy-making branch (city council) works closely with the administrative branch;
3. Identification of a liaison between policy-maker and administration in order to provide clear direction to the administrative branch as described in the statute;
4. Employment of qualified and trained staff in terms of education and experience;
5. Maintenance of checks and balances, nonpartisanship, and diversity in terms of female and minority representation on city council;
6. Provision for involvement of citizens;
7. Assurance that the system provides a prompt response to citizen requests for service;
8. Coordination and cooperation among agencies and among all levels of government: city, county, and state;
9. Requirement that a city manager meet International City/County Manager Association (ICMA) certification requirements and adhere to ICMA ethical standards;
10. Requirement that city council required training for all council members;
11. Adherence by city council members to the constitutional and statutory scope of their positions;
12. Recognition by the mayor and city council members, as the policy-making and legislative body, that they have equal responsibility to build consensus on the council and within the community around a vision of the city's future.

**Background/Action:** This position was adopted and approved by the Board of Directors of LWVCA October 30, 2013. The voters of the City of Columbia decided to keep City Hall as it has operated for 64 years, rejecting a strong-mayor form of government.

The issue of the kind of government the City of Columbia has been debated on and off since 1952. The two forms are Council – City Manager and Council – Mayor. The most comprehensive study was conducted in 2004-2005, when council appointed the Columbia Commission on Government Restructuring and Reform (“Commission”).

In May 2005, the LWVCA submitted a paper to the Commission recommending that the form of government selected provide for eight specific criteria. In 2013 the council rejected an ordinance for a referendum on changing the form of government. A petition drive forced council to set a referendum which it did on September 18, 2013. The vote for the referendum was on December 3, 2013. The LWVCA study showed a clear division between members as to which form would be better. Thus, the October 2013 League paper did not endorse either form but strongly urged the acceptance and implementation of the twelve criteria for good governance. The campaign brought diverse groups together on either side of the issue. League member Howard Duvall, who specialized in municipal government, said he has cautioned council members that they must start abiding by the legal standards that state law spells out for a council-manager, or strong-manager, form of government.

The special edition League Lines of October 2013 can be found after this page.