

**POSITIONS OF THE
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY
Lawrence, Kansas
May 2004**

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I. HEALTH

Statement of Position on HEALTH CARE (Approved 1976; edited 2004)

Support for: (1) medical care for all persons regardless of ability to pay; (2) an information and referral system of local medical services; (3) a clinic with a sliding scale of charges, and other auxiliary services; and (4) health education both in the schools and in the community.

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County believes that basic medical care, including preventive care, is the right of every person who needs and wants it. In order to encourage responsible use of costly medical services, everyone should pay something for the services they receive. There is support for charges based on ability to pay and members favor federal, state, and local governments' subsidizing of medical care for those who cannot afford it. Emergency needs are usually met, but increased preventive care could decrease emergencies. League supports more screening for people under 65 for purposes of health education, disease detection, and as a help to gaining access to medical care as it is needed.

Lack of information about available services contributes to the lack of adequate access. The League supports an information and referral system as a way of coordinating health and social services.

The League supports a clinic for providing medical care on a sliding scale basis, comparable to the treatment services available at Bert Nash Mental Health Center. There is also support for local

government to take some initiative in providing transportation needed to receiving health care. There was consensus that there should be a program of home delivery of meals and support for adult day care services, possibly as an expansion of the congregate meals program.

The League supports educational programs for healthy living. Health education courses and physical education classes should be in the curriculum at all grade levels with major emphasis on health, exercise, development of skills, and participation in sports that encourage lifelong physical fitness. The media should be effectively used in bringing health education topics to the public. Health education materials should be readily available at screening clinics. The League supports health education services of the Public Health Department. The League strongly supports access to school playgrounds and gymnasiums by the public when school is not in session.

Statement of Position on NURSING HOMES (Approved 1976; edited 2004)

Support for: (1) Medicaid reimbursements that are sufficient to cover the cost of care; (2) continued development of suitable community alternatives to nursing home care; (3) professional development to upgrade the staffing of nursing homes, in particular, training for aides in community education facilities; and (4) other specific changes in state licensing requirements.

The League supports adequate Medicaid rates for nursing home residents to make it economically feasible for administrators to accept Medicaid patients. League supports increases in Medicaid rates to cover costs of care but not to allow for excessive profits as well as a reclassification of patients according to both the level of skill and the amount of personal care needed by individual patients and reflected in the rates paid by Medicaid.

League members strongly support the concept of keeping people in their homes when possible and providing for their medical, personal, and social needs through the use of other community services.

League members support training of administrators and provision for physical and occupational therapy and dietary evaluation. They also support the use of "consulting" specialists such as VNA services, aide training and nutritional consultants, field placement of trainees in related nursing home services, etc.

Areas where decided improvement in regulation is desired are as follows:

In-service training. One hour per month is not adequate; all personnel would benefit from the training.

Aides. (a) Regulations should establish a minimum personnel/patient ratio based on the amount of care required by individual patients. (b) There should be general upgrading of aide training to allow more professional status and better pay achieved through vocational education programs in high schools, junior college programs, and continuing education programs. For those under 18 years of age, successful completion of such training would eliminate the present age requirement.

Community services considered by League members that would

help implement this goal are: (a) day care centers for the elderly; (b) existing projects such as Meals on Wheels, visiting nursing and personal care, homemaker services and physical therapy; (c) Council on Aging programs: transportation, information and administrative center.

Historical Notes:

In 1967 a study of nursing homes in Douglas County was included in a larger study of the Douglas County Welfare Department. Renewed interest in nursing homes in the League resulted from a 1972 report of the Douglas County Comprehensive Health Planning Council which revealed many of the problems of 1967 were still prevalent in 1972 despite changes in nursing home services in the county since 1967. In 1972-73 the Lawrence League reviewed the nursing home section only of the 1967 study, considering substantially the same questions taken up previously.

Initial League action included sending the survey and consensus to related professional and volunteer services in the community, governmental agencies at the local and state levels. The consensus was sent to state agencies with the approval of LWVK and with the explanation that it covered only our community. Since then, the League has supported, with letters, the recommendation of the Comprehensive Health Planning Council for the provision of training for aides, and certification of nursing home administrators.

The League has also supported funding of home nursing services as a regular part of the County Health Department services.

II. SOCIAL POLICY

Statement of Position on HOUSING FOR LOW-INCOME GROUPS (Approved 1975)

Support for (1) housing for low-income households in Lawrence and Douglas County; (2) a representative Housing Authority to analyze low- and moderate-income housing needs and plans to meet them; (3) city conservation policies and housing rehabilitation assistance in older neighborhoods; (4) compulsory periodic inspection of all rental units; (5) a truly minimum housing code that is periodically reviewed; and (6) some method of inspection to insure that all residential properties, when ownership is transferred, are in conformance with the minimum housing code.

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County continues to support the development of housing in Lawrence and Douglas County of both privately and publicly financed units to meet the need of low-income groups.

We think that the Lawrence Housing Authority should have members who represent a wide variety of community viewpoints and should broaden the scope of its activities to analyze and meet as yet poorly identified public housing needs. The League supports active tenants' associations in Lawrence.

Continued attention needs to be given to conservation, which includes maintenance of adequate services—sewers, streets, etc.—and to governmental assistance for housing rehabilitation within older neighborhoods in Lawrence. A minimum housing code is one tool to be used in conservation of such neighborhoods. Inspection of rental units should be compulsory and repairs should be completed within specified realistic time limits. Only if rehabilitation assistance is available, should repairs be required of owner-occupants who cannot afford them. A strong rehabilitation grants and loans program should be available for those in need.

The minimum housing code should contain only those standards

required for health and safety, to prevent irreversible deterioration, and to protect against neighborhood blight. The code should be applied to houses when they change ownership, with a written contract between buyer and seller covering who will do the repairs and within what time limits. Our present code should be reviewed to decide if its requirements are truly minimum; the code should be reviewed periodically.

Statement of Position on NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

(Approved 1982, 2000)

Support for protection of the civil and human rights of people with disabilities by promoting: (1) the elimination or minimizing of attitudinal and architectural barriers and (2) continue to support local agencies that promote independent living, including support for a county tax levy to help finance such an agency.

Attitudinal Barriers.—The League supports the activities of the Lawrence Commission on the Needs of Persons Having Disabilities and thinks it should have greater responsibility for initiating and monitoring local government action concerning barriers to the disabled and for public awareness programs.

As one means of increasing public awareness of disabilities and the needs of persons with disabilities, the League supports and urges use of school programs and adoption of curricula that sensitize children to disabilities and persons with disabilities.

Architectural Barriers.—Lawrence should expand its ordinance on accessibility to apply not only to public buildings but also to new private commercial and industrial construction and to the remodeling of 50 percent of an existing structure. Exemptions may be allowed in hardship situations and in the remodeling of architecturally historical structures.

All site plans should take accessibility for the handicapped into consideration.

In the redevelopment of downtown, accessibility for the handicapped should be a major concern.

Parking.—The Lawrence League strongly supports a city ordinance providing for reserved parking for the disabled, not only in public parking lots but also on public streets (Massachusetts in particular). Reserved parking spaces should be well marked by signs that also specify penalties for illegal parking in such spaces (official state placard or license plate required). The League believes that a substantial fine would be a suitable penalty.

Commercial places that have large parking lots should also be required to provide appropriately placed reserved handicapped parking spaces, well marked by signs and listing penalties.

Independent Living.—The League supports services to the disabled designed to promote their independence and independent living. Such services include, but are not necessarily limited to, counseling, advocacy, attendant care, transportation, and assistance in finding employment and housing.

The League supports a county tax levy to help fund an agency that provides the above services toward independent living.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Statement of Position on LOCAL LAND USE

(Approved 1973, 1984, 1999, 2000)

Support for: (1) positions adopted regarding planning principles and financing; (2) the controlled development of the Clinton Lake area; (3) implementation of comprehensive planning guides for Lawrence and Douglas County; and (4) recommendations for changes in the role of the planning staff and planning commission.

Planning Principles—Consensus

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County believes that planning for the city and county should preserve the social and physical environment by the control of growth. Growth should be controlled in a manner to avoid the unplanned proliferation of residential and other land uses, and also to avoid pollution of air, water, and land.

Planning should recognize that all human activities are interrelated. Agriculture, housing, employment, schools, cultural and recreational activities, open space, circulation and transportation must all be considered when formulating both long- and short-range planning goals; therefore, the planning process should be continuous, flexible, and based on citizen support and action.

We believe that planning for Douglas County should emphasize (1) the conservation of agricultural land and open space at the county level and (2) neighborhood unit planning at the city and town level. These goals are applicable to existing areas as well as to the design of new settlements. An open space system should provide both a barrier to uncontrolled growth in unincorporated areas and continuity of open space in between built up areas within the city and towns. The comprehensive plan should promote the conservation of agricultural land and natural areas as part of the open space system as well as historic and scenic sites. Objectives of the comprehensive plan should be to protect and promote community cohesiveness throughout the county by preserving the agricultural base of the county and, within the city and towns, by strengthening existing neighborhoods and the city and town cores and accommodating growth through in-fill development and new compact neighborhood units.

Design and control of growth should be based on an overall comprehensive plan containing the following elements:

1. Conservation of Agricultural Land and Open Space

New non-farm development in the unincorporated areas of the county should be limited to the urban growth areas of towns and cities in anticipation of annexation.

2. Neighborhood Planning

The primary urban planning unit should be the neighborhood, large

enough to support the location of a nursery-elementary school park (also serving as a community center), daily shopping and recreational spaces within walking distance for all residents of the neighborhood protected from through traffic and including bike paths and pedestrian walkways. Housing of various types for people of different ages and income should be available.

3. Environmental Preservation

This means adapting development to the capabilities of the land rather than adapting the land to the requirements of the development. Some examples:

- a. Design should take into consideration drainage, soil characteristics, substrata, and vegetation.
- b. Development should avoid hazardous building sites such as unstable slopes, uncompacted or undesignated fill, or areas subject to flooding.
- c. Development should avoid such alteration of land as to produce hazard, nuisance, deterioration or major changes.
- d. Design should consider the aesthetic quality of the area.
- e. Design should protect those areas that are intrinsically valuable as natural preserves.

Long-range economy, convenience, conservation, and respect for ecological necessity of land can be realized by locating and designing communities around drainage basin planning, encompassing flood plain zoning at the 100-year flood level.

4. Transportation

A well designed neighborhood unit plan should reduce to a minimum the use of the private car within each neighborhood. At the same time, an efficient distribution of the different activities within the whole urban and rural areas should also minimize the use of automobiles and allow an economical public transportation system to result.

5. Economic Considerations

Planning for development should take into consideration the tax burden of the public at large and therefore avoid undue public subsidization of expansion by keeping public improvements within the pace of population growth and tax valuation. As much as possible, the expense of development improvements should be borne by the developers or residents benefiting by such improvements at the time the land is subdivided, but without undue assessment to valuable agricultural land. Development standards should be designed to provide minimum maintenance costs for city and county.

There is need for new and revised ordinances and regulations for city and county to insure effective planning that would be evaluated on the basis of the above adopted planning principles.¹

There needs to be an increased emphasis in the city on planning

¹ Partly accomplished.

with formal coordination of planning functions of various city departments, the schools, and Kansas University. We would encourage better communication between planning staff, commissions, and citizens at large. We would also encourage a program of education aimed at further increasing the awareness of the citizens of the importance of good planning and their participation in the planning process.

The comprehensive plan should be undated to improve and also encompass the whole county.² Elements of the plan which need particular attention include:

- a. Storm Drainage.—Incorporate major streams of city and county in our park program as open space and coordinate with a storm drainage program at the 100-year flood level.
- b. Major Thoroughfare Plan.—The streets shall be designed according to function, and the function for which they are designed shall be preserved.
- c. Central Area of the City.—Keep it strong, active, and diverse.
- d. Parks.—More small parks accessible to neighborhoods considering all ages of people. The League believes there should be equality of equipment and maintenance in all parks.
- e. Strip Commercial.—We would discourage the development of strip commercial, preserve the function of the highway and avoid aesthetic blight, and encourage a program to remedy the existing problems.

Financing—Consensus

The League supports the position that for both financial and design reasons the city should discontinue its present policy of using benefit district financing for new development.

In combination with changing city policy on financing internal improvements, the League believes that there must be adequate, legally enforceable safeguards to protect the public from substandard development. The safeguards must include:

1. Updated comprehensive plans for the city and county including all the necessary elements but based primarily on an accurate storm drainage plan using the standards of the 100-year flood as well as other necessary infrastructure design.
2. 100-year flood plain zoning delineated for the city and county.
3. Published engineering standards for the city.
4. A program for careful inspection and enforcement.
5. Revised subdivision regulations, or a city ordinance to that effect, requiring the infrastructure (roads, storm and sanitary sewers, utilities, etc.) of a plan to be approved, and arrangements for financing construction of internal improvements guaranteed, before a plat is filed.

In the event that the city does not immediately discontinue benefit district financing of internal improvements in new developments, the League takes the position that the safeguards listed above to protect the public from substandard development must still be adopted and some means to reduce public risk must be employed.

² Partly accomplished.

Because of the current surplus of lots, it was felt that the city could discontinue financing for local streets and storm sewers in planned (but undeveloped) areas until it can adopt the needed standards, comprehensive planning (including infrastructure planning) and appropriate ordinances and regulations.

Lawrence needs to establish priorities and goals. League supports a Capital Improvement Master Plan to help establish these and indicate where money should be spent and the timing of such expenditures.³

Future public money which would normally be spent on subsidies and on delinquent assessments under present city policy should be used instead to pay for present day maintenance, services, and planning. Subsidies on local streets and storm sewers unless incorporated into local streets should be discontinued.

Clinton Reservoir—Consensus

The League supports controlled development of Clinton Reservoir and the surrounding area, with joint city-county government control.

Implementation of Planning—Consensus

(Approved 1984)

Role of the Planning Staff.--A professional planning staff is the key element in the proper implementation of the comprehensive plan. The planning staff should make unbiased, nonpolitical and professionally based recommendations to both governing bodies and their appointed commissions. Although political considerations are unavoidable in the decision making process, alternative recommendations and advice that embody political considerations should be identified as such.

Role of the Planning Commission.--Training should be offered to new, incoming planning commissioners. Suggestions for orientation include: (1) the appointment of new commissioners several months prior to the beginning of their terms so they could observe planning commission meetings, (2) a continuing commissioner could be assigned to each new member for orientation, and (3) a structured orientation program involving visual aids, tape cassettes and discussions with staff, developed by the planning staff or an outside source.

Ongoing education of planning commissioners should include the possibility of attending educational workshops. Planning staff should include the principles of good urban planning and land use management in their recommendations and should explain and stress them in study sessions.

A continuing problem exists because the city commission receives planning commission minutes before they are approved. To promote better communication between the planning commission and the city commission, a representative of the planning commission should attend city commission meetings: (1) to present the planning commission recommendations, (2) to explain the commission's position, and (3) to provide a different perspective on the issues from that of the planning staff.

³ Partly accomplished.

Implementation of Policies and Objectives of Plan '95.--A review of the consensus regarding those areas of Plan '95 Policies and Objectives that merit special emphasis in implementation is detailed in the Supplementary Statement.

Supplementary Statement, IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES OF PLAN '95 (April 1984; edited 2004)

The following consensus identifies those items meriting special emphasis in a review of the objectives and policies of Plan '95. These objectives and policies continue to have League support beyond the time frame of that specific comprehensive plan.

The "living," continuing planning process, including annual review, and the continuing need for acquainting new commissioners, especially city commissioners, with the Plan and its planning process through such methods as study sessions on the Plan.

Continuing review of supporting codes and ordinances, and specifically, for adoption of those ordinances needed to implement the planning process outlined in the Plan.

Neighborhood plans should be developed for the entire city and should be used in conjunction with the comprehensive plan in making planning decisions, including the location of commercial and industrial uses. The boundaries should be designed to protect the neighborhoods from intrusion and negative impacts by arterial and highway alignments, and no major streets or arterials should be improved within the limits of neighborhoods until alternatives have been thoroughly evaluated.

Data bases should be developed for commercial uses, industrial uses, transportation modes, storm drainage (i.e., storm drainage plans), and a land use map which is kept current because information is a prerequisite of good planning.

City policy should require areas subject to flooding or in a drainage course to be used for agriculture, open space, recreation, or similar uses. Storm drainage plans for all the drainage basins in Lawrence should be developed and considered in all planning, platting, and zoning requests. Decisions regarding street improvements should consider protection of the environment and especially of drainage courses. A trail network should be developed utilizing the natural watercourse system.

Parks should be provided in accessible locations that protect the natural environment, and cooperation between the city and county in providing parks, recreation, and open space acquisitions.

Site plan provisions should protect adjacent areas from commercial and industrial uses. Methods to discourage development of steep slopes unless strict conditions are met should be adopted. Development proposals should be reviewed for their impact on housing resources, and if the impact is found to be negative, proponents should find acceptable alternatives.

There is support for capital improvement planning, for rehabilitation programs, and for historic preservation efforts and encouragement of the private sector's participation, where appropriate.

Proponents of development outside the city limits should provide documentation showing that similar competitive sites are not available inside the city limits.

The city should implement the approved pattern of distribution of commercial and industrial development regarding both amount of land area and type of use. Proponents of commercial development within the city limits should provide documentation to show need for their zoning request however members do support the availability of competitive site choices for commercial and industrial uses where appropriate need is demonstrated.

Land zoned for commercial, service, or office use, should revert to its original zoning if not utilized within a certain period of time. Strip zoning should be avoided; spot zoning should only be used to provide a needed service not already available within a neighborhood.

The Central Business District should be Lawrence's primary regional commercial center, and proposals for extension of regional, community, strip or spot commercial developments should be analyzed in light of potential negative impact on the CBD.

Traffic access and circulation, both pedestrian and vehicular (including bicycles) should be addressed before approving zoning requests, and considered in platting and site planning. Curb cuts should not be approved where they create congestion or traffic counts in excess of street capacity.

There is a wide difference of opinion concerning buildings in a planned commercial center being an architecturally compatible grouping. Members do, however, support urban development that is guided to promote "environmental, identity, or aesthetic" qualities and sign policies consistent with good urban design standards as well as strict enforcement of those policies. Shopping centers should be on primary or secondary arterials sited to serve two or more adjoining residential areas, and should have ample on site parking.

Elementary school service areas should be matched with neighborhood boundaries.

Historical Notes

The League study of development of the Clinton Lake area evolved from the Clinton Reservoir Water Conference held in Lawrence in November 1968, which was a cooperative effort of several local agencies and groups including the League. "A Study of County-wide Planning and Zoning Including a Reconsideration of the Planning Principles Adopted in the Clinton Reservoir Study" was the League's 1971-72 local study item. In 1972-73 the Planning and Zoning Committee continued the study, focusing on financing.

During the 1970s the League was busy taking action under the planning principles consensus. It saw the Subdivision Regulations through to adoption with many suggestions, supported the annexation of the Riverside area, supported the downtown improvement through NDP funding, opposed the commercial zoning at 31st and Highway 59 without consideration for traffic and updating of the Comprehensive Plan, supported the city discontinuing financing of public improvements, and continually supported following and updating the Comprehensive Plan.

Statement of Position on PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND BIKEWAYS

(Combined 1980)

Support for a comprehensive public transportation system for Lawrence

and measures to achieve that end: local subsidies, federal grants, innovative operations, and city planning that considers transportation and environmental problems. Support for adoption and implementation of a plan for a comprehensive bikeway system for Lawrence to provide for and to encourage the safe and efficient use of bicycles as a means of transportation and recreation.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

(Approved 1971)

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County supports public transportation for the City of Lawrence. Local and federal governments should share responsibility for meeting local transportation needs. The City should see that comprehensive bus service is provided, either as a city owned or as a private, subsidized service. The City should investigate federal funds available for mass transportation.

The League believes that transportation by bus can be encouraged through introduction of innovative methods, such as, but not limited to, dial-a-bus plans, persuasive advertising and educational campaigns, and combined school-city bus service. A reduction in the number of cars driven to the High School is desirable.

The League believes that public transportation needs are not being met in some areas of the city, particularly those areas with greater numbers of low-income and elderly citizens. Bus routes should be planned to provide service to those persons needing it most, while trying to maximize the number of riders.

Transportation needs should be an important consideration in city planning in the future. A comprehensive bus system would reduce air pollution and traffic congestion, thereby providing greater safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

BIKEWAYS

(Approved 1976)

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County supports the adoption and implementation of a plan for a comprehensive bikeway system for Lawrence to provide for and to encourage the safe and efficient use

of bicycles as a means of transportation and recreation. The City should enforce state and local laws that pertain to bicycling and provide appropriate parking facilities for bicycles. We support the use of any available federal and state funds for the development of the system. The remainder of the costs for implementation and maintenance should be funded by local public and private sources. We support the annual licensing of bicycles at a minimal fee such as one dollar. In order to promote safety and education of bicyclists, the licensing of bicycle riders should be a long term goal. Any funds from bicycle licenses exceeding costs should be used in ways to benefit bicyclists.

We support the use of Class I bikeways (bike paths) and/or Class II bikeways (bike lanes) along principle streets rather than Class III bikeways (bike routes). Planned bicycle paths/lanes should be installed when principal streets are constructed or widened. Bicyclists who are familiar with the problems of bicycling in our area should be actively involved in the development of the bikeway system. The comprehensive bikeway plan should be reviewed and updated periodically. Plans should be made for the development of bikeways in new areas as the city expands. Planning and implementation of engineering design should take

into consideration such factors as safety, length and width of bikeways, vertical clearance grades, intersection design, continuity, drainage, signing and surfaces.

The City and County should be responsible for the maintenance of the bikeway system. When a bicycle path is adjacent to a roadway, the bicyclist should be required to use the path.

IV. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Statement Of Position On LOCAL BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS (Approved 1979)

Each citizen board or commission that is created by the City or County Commission to share in the rights and responsibilities of local government should: (1) have a clear statement of the purpose and responsibilities of the board or commission, officers, bylaws, minutes, and new member orientation; (2) base decisions on information actively gathered from all sources whether lay or professional, staff or public; (3) work with other boards or commissions on issues of mutual interest; and (4) provide the City or County Commission with recommendations on issues within its province as it wishes.

The lines of communication among the city (or county) boards and commissions, and the public need to be expanded using such methods as (1) published lists of members, meeting times and places, and agendas; (2) insuring that letters, memos, etc., reach their intended destinations; and (3) that useful information be fully provided interested parties.

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County recognizes the City or County Commission's ultimate responsibility for the proper and efficient management of their agencies, and for determining the policies with which the city or county operates. It further recognizes that boards and commissions are created by the City or County Commission to relieve them of some of the many burdens by utilizing community resources in the form of volunteer citizen help. Because League is devoted to the concept of citizen participation in government, it particularly endorses the role boards and commissions play in this sharing of governmental responsibility.

League recommends that boards and commissions organize themselves more effectively by employing the following: (1) a clear statement of the purpose and responsibilities of the board or commission; (2) a fully organized board with officers and, if the board is of sufficient size, subcommittees; (3) a full set of bylaws; (4) complete and organized minutes as historical records; (5) a trained secretary, not a member of the board, to take minutes; and (6) an orientation for new board members provided by the chairman that includes both a discussion of responsibilities and the presentation of a set of organizational documents.

League views board and commission members as representative of both the City Commission and the public. Members' decisions should be based on their best judgment after gathering information from all sources whether professional or lay, staff or public. A spirit of openness and availability to such input is needed to encourage more dialogue with the public. The decision making process should occur in meetings open to the public.

Communication between the City (or County) Commission, the public, and boards and commissions needs to be expanded. Attending meetings, reading minutes, offering suggestions, complimenting effective performance, etc., all indicate a community concerned with its institutions. Publication of agendas, meeting times and places, lists of current members, board vacancies, and handouts increase the public's awareness of boards and commissions. The city staff needs to be diligent in passing on all communications intended for a board or commission, in providing useful information, and in keeping files up-to-date in the city offices. Staff reports to the various boards and commissions should be objective and factual.

League believes that boards and commissions should work together on issues of mutual interest. Some public issues might be more easily resolved because of recommendations based on combined evaluations.

Finally, League believes that any board or commission may take the initiative on any issues within its areas of interest to provide the City or County Commission with a recommendation or to make a request.

Statement Of Position On DOUGLAS COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(Approved April 1998, 2000)

Supports measures that promote an efficient and responsive county government; (1) Meetings of the Board of County Commissioners at established times with published agendas; (2) The appointment of a county administrator who is responsible to the Board of County Commissioners;⁴ and (3) Election of policy-making county officials only.

The League supports an increase in the number of County Commission districts. At this time the League does not support full time commissioners.

The League strongly affirms the State League position advocating election of policy-making county officials only.

Statement Of Position On CITY GOVERNMENT

(Approved 1991)

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County believes that the structure and operation of Lawrence city government must be representative, accountable, accessible, provide good municipal services, provide adequate balanced information, and cooperate with other governments.

Representativeness

The governing body should consider the welfare of the community as a whole in its decision making, without discounting the needs of the geographical regions within the city. Particular care must be taken with the needs of north and east Lawrence.

The commission, as a representative governing body, should include individuals from the diverse socioeconomic and ethnic strata of the community. To better accomplish this: (1) As the city grows, the number of members of the governing body should be increased from 5 to 7; (2) Lawrence should consider a plan in which members of the governing body

⁴ This goal has been accomplished.

are elected from districts. In the primary election, two candidates would be nominated from each district by voters in that district. In the general election, one representative from each district would then be elected by all the voters, not just voters from that district.

Accountability

The city governing body and appointed staff should have clear lines of responsibility. Accountability includes objective criteria for measuring performance such as: organizational audits; performance evaluations; clear job descriptions; objective standards, set in advance, for evaluation of the city manager; and performance-based budgeting. Decisions should be based on organizational goals and objectives.

Accessibility and Responsiveness

A responsive and accessible government maintains open communications with its citizens. Citizens must know to whom they can go for information and should be encouraged to participate in the governmental process. Openings for advisory boards and commissions should be well publicized, with citizens given the opportunity to nominate members for those boards and commissions. There should be timely notice for public hearings and adequate time for public response. Furthermore, deadlines for document delivery and public responses to proposed city action should be well publicized.

Good Municipal Services

Municipal services should be equitable, efficient, and economical.

Adequate Balanced Information

Information for decision making by the governing body should be adequate, timely, and balanced. There should be a training program for new members of the city's governing body, particularly on technical matters. The city might consider an outside consultant or an organization such as the League of Kansas Municipalities for this training. To facilitate the learning process, the city might wish to consider an interval between the election and seating of newly elected members of the governing body.

City staff should facilitate decision making by providing concise and balanced information to all members of the governing body. The city may wish to consider a department similar to the state's Legislative Research Department.

Cooperation with Other Governments

Lawrence should incorporate procedures that would ensure effective communication and cooperation with the school district and with county government, particularly in planning city services.

Form of Government

The League believes that the city governing body, which is responsible for policy making, should be assisted by a professional manager who is responsible for the daily administrative affairs of the

League supports an enlarged commission, particular as the city continues to grow. If district elections are instituted, League supports a plan where members of the governing body are nominated from districts, but elected by all voters of the city. In addition to increasing representation, an enlarged commission could consider instituting a committee system for the governing body. There was no clear consensus on the method of selection of the mayor, although there was agreement that any mayor selected from the commission should have been on the commission for at least a year. Furthermore, the procedure for selecting the mayor should be formally established in writing by the governing body.

Statement of Position on TAX ABATEMENTS

(Approved 1999)

The League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County believes that the City of Lawrence should modify its current tax abatement policy to include the following:

1. The local school board must approve abatement of that portion of the property tax which would be collected for public education.
2. The in-lieu taxes should be adjusted annually to reflect changes in property values, using an average rate of inflation in property values in the county. The county appraiser should devise an appropriate average for this purpose.
3. The cost-benefit model, used to determine the worthiness of tax abatement applications, contains many variables, both from data provided by the business and data from the city and other sources. An independent contractor should review data from the city and other sources for accuracy, reliability, and completeness at the time of the initial application and then at three-year intervals.

League believes that the City of Lawrence should adhere to its own existing tax abatement policy by ensuring that annual reports generated for use by the Tax Abatement Administrative Review Committee are complete. The following data should be include in the annual report:

- assessed value of the property when an abatement was granted;
- estimated current assessed value of the property had no new investment been put in place;
- current assessed value of the property under fair assessment;
- estimated current amount of tax abated (= current value x the mill rate x the abatement percentage);
- estimated cumulative amount of tax abated;
- number of years the abatement has been granted;
- initial year of the abatement;
- current amount of in-lieu taxes paid;
- cumulative amount of in-lieu taxes paid.

Legal publication of this report should be required, providing readily available information of citizens about companies currently receiving abatements.