

2017

Proposal for 2017 – 2018 (or 2019) Update Study on LWVRV Jackson County Government

Proposed Scope of Study:

To review and update the 1997-98 Study report prepared by LWVRV and LWVA on Jackson County Government. The current update will include the coverage of four (4) questions.

- 1) After researching and reviewing current government structure, how do we combine **Josephine County** into our position?

Concentrating on the Board(s) of Commission (BOC):

- 2) What number of commissioners would best serve our growing populations?
- 3) Would non-partisan elections serve our voters any better than the current partisan elections?
- 4) Based on findings of the recent LWVOR election methods study, would an alternative election method (ballot) be more effective in representing a greater number of citizens.

Background and Justification for Proposal

1. Does it fall within League Principles?

Yes, the study is to explore the equity of voting methods and government structures that may give voters more motivation to participate in the civic arena.

LWV's PURPOSE: "to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to act on selected governmental issues.

2. Does the League already have positions that can be applied to the proposal?

Yes, this is an update of a previous local study. Regarding ballot systems (#4), use of the new LWVOR election methods study will allow us to evaluate local needs more clearly.

3. Is government action needed? Possible?

Yes. Both the structure of the counties, especially the BOCs, and election methods used to seat commissioners will take government action (or citizen initiative) to change, if change is suggested.

4. How much member interest has been expressed for the issue?

Leaguers have long been interested in elections, and oversight of local government. With the intensive observer-corps effort that has gone into the Jackson County BOC by the LWVRV, we are in a particularly informed situation to make evaluations. Additionally, elections have (and should be) one of our fortes. The BOCs in particular, for which the League has also run forums, is the overarching body that controls points of interests in all our different cities and municipalities.

5. Is this the crucial time for the issue?

Currently, coming out of a period of contentious elections in 2016, members are even more aware of the advantage of exploring beneficial election changes. Very often that starts at a local, grass-roots level. Further, this may be a time when present members and potential members are considering the importance of their own participation in government.

6. Do the political realities permit effective action?

Possibly. As an example, during the general election for Jackson Co. BOC, both the Republican and Democratic contenders voiced public support to explore expanding the number of commissioners. Political parties will more than likely oppose non-partisan elections, but citizens may still be interested. With the growing number of (non-party)

'Independents' or voters registered as "not a member of a party", this may become more relevant. Regarding election methods, in 2016 another county in Oregon passed an initiative to adopt an alternative system. Each of these examples points to changes that might be considered but which originated outside of the LWV.

7. Is this the appropriate level of the League to address the issue?

Yes. The LWVRV is the ONLY level of league able to address the issue of BOCs in the two counties incorporated within our league: Jackson and Josephine. While statewide structure of BOCs could be suggested (or developed), since the league is always 'grass-roots' first, this is quite the appropriate level.

8. Will the League's involvement make a unique impact? Increase the League's influence and credibility?

As mentioned earlier, due to the significant work of, and documentation by, a member or two, the LWVRV has a clearer understanding of the Jackson BOC than any other non-government organization. As such, our involvement in any suggestions for possible change or improvement would have clear credibility.

The League's bipartisan ideology makes it a perfect organization for researching the concepts of non-partisan elections and for single winner and proportional representation systems, as well as for educating the public on these as well as the pro and cons of the remaining questions. This type of educational (or action) campaign would enhance the League's visibility.

9. What are prospects for funding anticipated educational activities and/or action strategies?

Some questions of funding are uncertain, but many of the educational activities can be performed by volunteers through inexpensive civic presentations. Meetings and conference calls or other 'virtual' communications will have no outright costs to League. Report printing can more than likely be funded by our general fund (or distributed primarily in electronic form).

It is doubtful that the LWVRV could be able to solely fund a local ballot campaign (or two), regardless of costs being exceedingly less than for state ballot initiatives. Such efforts (if attempted as a lead organization), may be beyond the resources of the local League at this point. That being said, such action campaigns often inspire greater membership and giving by donors when they understand the goals to improve elections and government.

10. Will the League be able to draw on allies?

[Yes or NO? Possibly?] The LWVRV may hope to gain allies (if changes or actions are recommended) though current, and former commissioners as well as those who have campaigned for office. Good government groups in the area or activist groups concerned with the work/decision of the BOC, may also make good allies. Further, voters in Jackson and Josephine County unaffiliated with either of the two major parties may be enticed by the issue of non-partisan elections, concentrating more on issue-based contests.

11. Is there a chairperson for the study?

Yes, Jackie Clary and Barbara Klein are willing to co-chair this study.

12. Are there members willing to be on this study committee?

Yes. Currently we have 4 members who have expressed interest in this subject. It is also an opportunity to reach out to new (and potential) members. **[ASK OTHERS.]**

(klein)