

2002

REQUEST FOR CONCURRENCE AT ANNUAL MEETING FOR A CHANGE
IN THE LWV POSITION ON JACKSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

To: Boards of Directors of LWVAshland LWVRogue Valley.

From: Jean Milgram, Chair, Joint County Charter Revision Committee.

After over a year of study and discussion of the best approach to a change in the structure of the Jackson County Board of Commissioners, our committee has found that the current position on county government adopted by both our Leagues in 1999 precludes our considering the full range of options available to us.

Specifically, our position states:

The commissioners should be elected either at large or by a combination of district/at large...

We request that the wording of this part of the position be changed to:

The commissioners should be elected at large or by districts or by a combination of these...

In presenting our position to various groups and individuals in Jackson County, we found that there is strong support in some areas for dividing the county into districts in the belief that this would improve representation of their area. Districts furthermore would allow candidates to campaign on a smaller scale, which hopefully would give us a larger pool of candidates from which to elect commissioners. We would like to offer the voters this option in a separate initiative measure, regardless of whether or not we propose a BOC of five part-time members or one full-time and four part-time. As it is, we are precluded from including districting in a proposal for five part-time members.

We ask that the boards of directors of both leagues recommend this change to their members at their annual meeting in 2002 for concurrence.

League of Women Voters
County Charter Revision Committee

AGENDA
Monday, January 14, 2002

Decisions:

I What initiative measure(s) to file:

The County Counsel has informally told Kathy Beckett, Election Clerk, that our initiative measure on the question: "Shall there be a five member County Board of Commissioners, one of whom will be elected as a fully compensated chair?" seems to have three subjects: number, compensation, and method of choosing a chair.

We can: (1) elect to try to file it anyway, and if found to have more than one subject, decide what to do then;

(2) go with Ruth's suggested rewrite: "Question: Shall there be a five member Board of Commissioners, with four serving at half time?" (It may be that the county counsel will think this is two subjects). This leaves the method of selecting a chair the way it is, which is that the commissioners choose their own chair. (See county charter.)

(3) also have a fallback position, so can file another initiative if the one filed is found to have more than one subject. Our fallback would have to have the number of commissioners in one initiative and the "half time" in a different one. Perhaps we can reverse the order, so that the number will only go to five if the half-time initiative passes. This avoids ending up with five or more full-time commissioners. It could possibly give us three half-time commissioners.

II Evelyn Ousterhout has resigned as a chief petitioner. We need to select someone else from the League as our representative.

memo

To: County Charter Revision Committee of the Leagues of Women Voters
of Jackson County.

From: Jean Milgram, chair.

Date: March 7, 2022.

Where We Are Now

After all the discussion and new ideas and old ideas and see-sawing and repeating ourselves endlessly, I've decided it's time to look at where we are in order to see if we can move on.

As I think about it, we have arrived at a clear decision point between two courses of action: (1) to go ahead and file the simplest initiatives that will carry out the basics of our position, or (2) to postpone filing until another year.

The time line for the filing procedure is enclosed. It's clear we need to expect at least a month to go by before we get permission to circulate petitions. If we file by March 15th, that will give us a maximum of three months to get the signatures. Every day we delay drops this, and three months is NOT a long time.

If we say we are postponing this, we are essentially giving up. We will lose momentum, lose people, and lose credibility. We cannot afford to do this to the League.

What we have arrived at, essentially, is about as simple a proposal as we can possibly put before the voters. Let's file it. We will get a ruling by the county clerk on whether or not each initiative contains a single subject. If the ruling is positive, we will not be assured there won't be a court challenge but no one is ever assured of that when any initiative is filed. If it's negative, we can re-file and still have time. The only way to find out is to go ahead. Once we have done that, we can deal with the obstacles as they arise. But if we don't start, we will never know and we will never finish.

Filing Procedure - Time Line

Day 1. Submit proposed initiative text to county clerk.

Day 1 + Five Business Days. County clerk notifies us in writing that text does or does not comply with the single subject requirement.*

Day 1 + Six Business Days. County elections official forwards two copies of prospective petition to D.A. for title.

Day 1 + Six Business Days + Five Business Days - D.A. returns a ballot title to the county elections official.

Next two steps:

1. County elections official furnishes chief petitioners with ballot title.
2. Co. elec. official publishes notice of receipt of ballot title in a newspaper of general circulation, including notice that an elector may file a petition for a review of the ballot title. Deadline: seven business days after ballot title is filed by D.A. with the county clerk.

We are now up to Day 1 + 6 + 5 + 7 BUSINESS days. If title is challenged, the Circuit Court reviews and makes a final decision. No time limit is set for this review, but I am told the court is expeditious.

County elections official approves the cover and signature sheets for circulation after the challenge period for the ballot title expires, or, if the ballot title is challenged, after receiving the Circuit Court order that the ballot title meets the statutory requirements. Once cover and signature sheets are approved and the statement of organization is submitted, the signature gathering can begin.

*The 2000 County Manual says: "Any registered voter who disagrees with the single subject determination may file a petition with the Circuit Court challenging the single subject determination. The deadline to file a petition to review the single subject determination is no later than the seventh business day after the ballot title is filed with the county election official." However, apparently a court challenge of the single subject determination can apparently be made after this deadline, even after the measure has become law. (Ruth researched this - we'll have to ask her for details.)

PROPOSAL

March 7, 2002

The the League of Women Voters of Rogue Valley and the League of Women Voters of Ashland file three initiatives on March 14 or 15 as follows:

1. Change the composition of the Jackson County Board of Commissioners to five ~~part-time~~ members. Provide for transition in four years.
2. Provide for compensation of all part-time commissioners of not more than \$20,000 per annum, with a periodic (every two years) increase in the maximum compensation to adjust for inflation as determined by the consumer price index.
3. Set up five county districts for election of the five commissioners, with a procedure for establishing the districts.

If #1 is found to contain more than a single subject, we could remove the words "part-time" from both #1 and #2 and re-file.

2001

LWV Charter Change Proposals

The League of Women Voters of the Rogue Valley and the League of Women Voters of Ashland are proposing several county charter changes. Because of a state statute requiring that all initiative measures amending a county charter must each contain a single subject, we may have to offer as many as three initiative measures. Following are the specific changes we support. The exact wording of the proposed ballot measures has not yet been determined.

One. Enlarge the Board of Commissioners from 3 to 5 members.

Two. In the event that One passes, one of the five members of the BOC will be elected by the voters as the chair and will receive full monetary compensation. The other four commissioners will each receive one-third of the full compensation.

Three. In the event that One and Two pass, the chair will be elected at large and the other four of the five members of the BOC will be elected by districts. Districts will be established by a commission appointed by the BOC, such commission to be representative of all the areas of the county and all political parties and guided by the one-man/one vote ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Why? Enlarge Board of Commissioners from 3 to 5 members?

LWV believes this would provide representation of more points of view.

LWV thinks that a quorum of two is not enough for policy decisions governing a multi-million dollar operation affecting a population that is soon to be 200,000.

Accidental meetings of a quorum of two, which violate the open meetings law, are hard to avoid with only three members.

Why? Have a full-time chair with other commissioners paid less?

The LWV believes that at least one commissioner should be full time in order to have an elected official available to the public during all regular business hours. Also, commissioners are often required to deal with state and federal elected officials who sometimes prefer connecting with someone who is directly responsible to the voters. We believe an elected chair in a full time position could most effectively fulfill these public relations and communications responsibilities.

The LWV believes that the primary duty of all members of the Board of Commissioners is to make policy and that all administration should be left to the appointed county administrator. We believe that commissioners, other than the chair, should not be expected to put in full workdays on county business but can limit their hours to those required for those meetings and activities necessary to make decisions on policy. For this reason, we think their pay should be less than that of the full-time chair.

A part-time board of well qualified people is now the norm for governing businesses, either public or private, and many local governments. School boards, hospital boards, transit district boards and private corporation boards of directors follow this standard. It is a proven and efficient business practice.

Why? Elect four members by district?

LWV believes that dividing the county into districts of equal population according to common interests, as far as that is possible, will give residents more assurance that their concerns are represented on the BOC.

LWV believes that more people will be attracted to running for county commissioner if campaigning is required in only a fourth of the county instead of all of it.

X

LWV believes that district representatives on the Board of Commissioners will be able to serve while still functioning in their primary occupation instead of being required, as they are now, to spend full-time on the commission. This should produce a larger pool of candidates for the job.