

League of Women Voters Upholds Ohio Constitution Through State Ballot Issue Recommendations

The LWVO board met on September 12-13 and debated long and hard about the substance of the four proposed constitutional amendments and one statewide referendum that will be on the November ballot. The following positions were taken by the LWVO Board.

Issue 1: Earlier Filing Deadlines for Statewide Ballot Issues, Constitutional Amendment - **SUPPORT**

Earlier filing deadlines for statewide ballot issues and a streamlined judicial review process generated the most extensive board discussion. The board recognized the benefits of earlier, uniform deadlines and an expedited review process as means to support voters' informed participation (LWVUS' position on Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation). The board also agreed that Issue 1 belonged in the constitution because only Ohio voters can define responsibilities for the Ohio Secretary of State and the Ohio Supreme Court. (LWVO's position on the Ohio Constitution). The board thought that the benefits of Issue 1 outweighed the disadvantages, including the possibility that the tighter filing and review timeframes might disadvantage lesser-funded organizations seeking to get issues on the ballot in the face of potentially costly legal challenges.

Issue 2: Bond Issue for the Clean Ohio Program, Constitutional Amendment - **SUPPORT**

The board unanimously agreed to support the sale of additional bonds for the Clean Ohio Program (Issue 2) based on the LWVO positions on the Ohio Constitution and Land Use. The proposed amendment provides funds for environmental conservation and revitalization and is identical to one supported by LWVO - and passed by the voters - in 2000. And like its predecessor, Issue 2 must be approved by the voters as a constitutional amendment because the Ohio constitution does not permit an appropriation being made for a period longer than two years by the General Assembly.

Issue 3: Protect Private Property Water Rights, Constitutional Amendment - **OPPOSE**

Based on LWVO's position on the Ohio Constitution, the board also unanimously agreed to oppose Issue 3 regarding private property water rights. Discussion centered on the amendment's intent, which is to maintain the status quo regarding private property water rights. In that case, Issue 3 is unnecessary; in addition, it might result in unanticipated changes in land use rights. In either case, it does not belong in the constitution.

Issue 5: Payday Lending Legislation, Referendum - **NEUTRAL**

The board's decision to remain neutral on Issue 5, the referendum on payday lending legislation, was also unanimous—and unavoidable. Although the board was sympathetic to the legislature's effort to reform payday-lending practices in order to reduce the number of people trapped in cycles of debt, the League has no state or national position under which to take action.

Issue 6: Casino in Clinton County, Constitutional Amendment - **OPPOSE**

The board unanimously agreed to oppose Issue 6, the proposed constitutional amendment authorizing a casino in Clinton County, based on the LWVO positions on the Ohio Constitution and State Finance. The designation of a specific 94-acre parcel of land for a casino is too narrow a concept to be in the constitution. Furthermore, in contrast to LWVO's position on State Finance that states taxes should be fair and equitable, this amendment directs a disproportionate share of tax revenue to Clinton County.