

League of Women Voters weighs in on ballot measures

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CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS

There are a lot of important issues on the ballot for the November 6 election – affordable housing, taxes, clean energy, jobs, abortion, the influence of money in politics and how we treat immigrants. Your vote can make a difference.

The League of Women Voters helps voters with two kinds of election information.

Debbie Aiona is the Action Chair and Margaret Noel the Communications Chair for League of Women Voters of Portland. This column includes recommendations from the League of Women Voters of Oregon.

• First, we produce neutral, unbiased information in our printed and online voters' guides. We also produce nonpartisan videos of election forums and candidate interviews. You can learn where to find this information with our ad in this issue of Street Roots or on our websites: lwvpdx.org

and vote411.org.

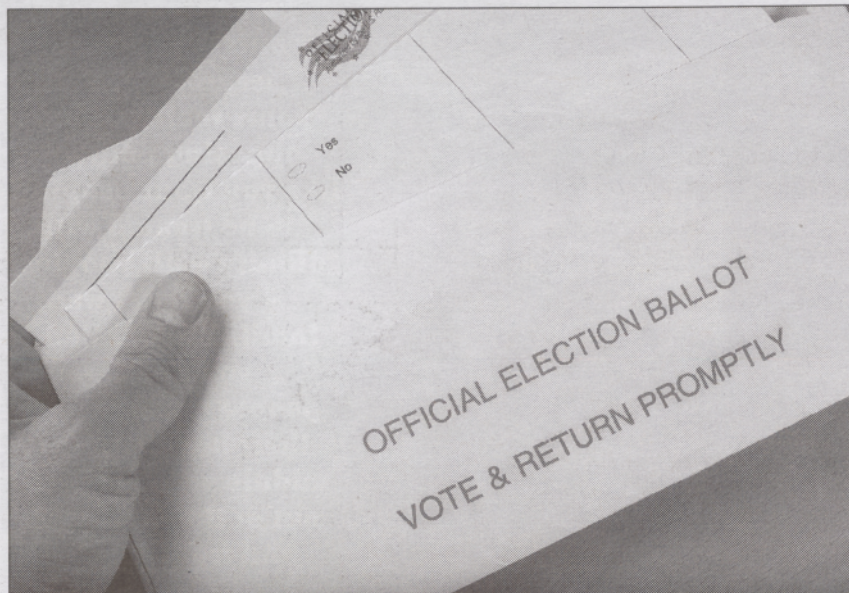
• Second, although we never support or oppose any candidate, we make recommendations on ballot measures, when we believe the election's outcome would harm or help Oregonians.

The League bases its ballot measure recommendations on studies of the measures and of the general issues. League members study issues carefully from all viewpoints. Then they discuss the study's results and must come to an agreement on an official position. We have used LWV advocacy positions adopted at the local, state and national levels to decide on how we think people should vote on the ballot measures in this fall's election. (You can read the full text of all the League's local, state and national positions under "Advocate" from the top menu on the lwvpdx.org website.)

LWV Recommendations on Metro and City of Portland Measures

Measure 26-199: This bond measure would fund affordable housing in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties. The money from the \$652.8 million bond measure would be used to build housing for low-income households, preserve affordability of existing low-income housing, and buy land for developing future affordable housing. More than half the units would be affordable to very low-income households. A bond oversight committee and independent audits would provide accountability.

The Portland, Clackamas County, and Washington County Leagues recommend a Yes vote. The League of Women Voters believes that persons in need have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care and that the government bears primary responsibility for financing programs designed to address those needs.



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Measure 26-200: This measure would limit campaign contributions and expenditures, and would require financial disclosures in campaign communications to voters. It allows candidates to accept funds from Portland's publicly funded campaign finance system.

LWV Portland Board recommends a Yes vote. The LWV "Money in Politics" position calls for public financing of campaigns, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits. The League also supports the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections.

Measure 26-201: This measure would impose a surcharge on large retailers, with proceeds dedicated to a Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund and spent on renewable energy projects, weatherization, job training and employment for disadvantaged workers. A committee made up of community members would make recommendations to the Portland Mayor on distribution of funds, based on requirements outlined in the measure. Accountability would be provided by means similar to those for the Portland Children's Levy, with an oversight board appointed by the Mayor and annual financial audits.

LWV Portland Board recommends a Yes vote. The LWV Climate Change position supports aggressive efforts to restore balance to the planet's climate systems by reducing the carbon dioxide in our atmosphere to 350 parts per million, the upper safe limit. LWV supports gradually changing from fossil fuels to alternative forms of energy and making sure the transition is fair to all Americans. We believe that all levels of government bear the responsibility to provide equality of

opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.

Statewide Ballot Measures

Measure 102: This referral from the legislature would allow using local bonds in partnership with nongovernmental entities for financing affordable housing. Currently, local governments can pass bonds for affordable housing with voter approval, but the Oregon Constitution prohibits local governments from combining bond funds with other resources from nongovernmental entities, such as non-profit housing developers. This limits access to resources like federal low-income tax credits, which may only be used by developers. This measure would remove the current prohibition by making an exception for affordable housing development.

The LWV of Oregon Board recommends a Yes vote. The League believes that government at all levels must make available sufficient funds for housing assistance programs.

Measure 103: This measure would amend the state Constitution and prohibit taxes and fees on "groceries" as defined by the measure and enacted or amended after September 2017.

The LWV of Oregon Board recommends a No vote. This is a very broad and confusing measure. It would apply to all types of food and beverage products intended for human consumption, but not to other basic grocery items. Passing this measure would result in the loss of tax revenue from businesses

involved in any aspect of producing, transporting or selling foods and beverages. The League believes there should be a high bar for amending Oregon's Constitution, because new provisions are difficult to change once passed. In addition, the League believes that any tax proposal should be equitable and evaluated with regard to its effect on the entire tax structure. This broad constitutional amendment would give tax exemptions to many businesses, but not others, so it is not equitable, and it would make enacting needed reforms to Oregon's tax system more difficult in the future.

Measure 104: This measure would amend the state Constitution and require that a three-fifths legislative majority approve bills raising revenue.

The LWV of Oregon Board recommends a No vote. The League believes that efficient government depends on adequate financing. Limiting the government's ability to raise money is a problem if it interferes with providing services, disrupts government functioning, inhibits progress or results in loss of local control. This constitutional amendment would apply not only to bills raising revenue through new or increased taxes, but also to fees such as fees for hunting licenses and to the elimination or reduction of tax breaks.

Measure 105: This measure would repeal the law limiting the use of state and local law enforcement resources to enforce federal immigration laws. This law was enacted nearly unanimously in 1987 to help prevent racial profiling.

The LWV of Oregon Board recommends a No vote. The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal and right to humane treatment. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law. In addition, law enforcement officials who oppose this measure express concern that undocumented individuals who are crime victims or witnesses may be unwilling to come forward because they would fear being turned over to federal immigration authorities. This would undermine law enforcement and crime prevention in our communities.

Measure 106: This measure would prohibit spending public funds directly or indirectly for abortion. If passed, this measure would reduce access to abortion services, including services to women on the Oregon Health Plan and State of Oregon employees.

The LWV of Oregon Board recommends a No vote. The League believes every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality health care, including birth control and the privacy to make reproductive choices. Decisions about abortion services should be left to the woman and her health care provider.

Our democracy and our future depend on active voters. Please vote!