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GOVERNMENT

Inter-Governmental: Expanded Council of Mayors

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports an expanded Council of Mayors to include the County Commission:

1. The purpose of the expanded Council should be to provide communication, cooperation, and exchange of information between the units of government in the county.
2. The Council should remain informal in nature with one representative from each city and the County Commission.
3. Clerical staff should be provided by the county or hired by the Council.
4. The Council should be financed through dues assessed equally to each unit of government (and through federal grants, if available).
5. Agendas should be sent to the elected members of township board and school boards. These units should be encouraged to attend Council meetings and to provide information to the Council on common problems and take back to their units the concerns of the Council.

APPROVED: November, 1977

FOOTNOTES: 1999 – Retain as written. Liaison representative from Johnson County is the Chair person of the County Commission. Current name of the Council is Johnson/Wyandotte Counties – Council of Mayors

Local Government: Strengthening and Reorganizing County Government

BACKGROUND: The current positions are the composite of multiple studies of local government, beginning in 1952. Each study developed from conclusions of prior studies. Some positions were then placed in a more appropriate area under Natural Resources.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports strengthening and reorganizing Johnson County government. This should include:

1. Home Rule (Charter Government)
2. Separation of administrative and policy-making functions that include:
 - a. Increase the number of policy-making positions to seven, part-time members with one part-time member elected at large, to serve as a 4-year chair; members to be elected on a non-partisan basis.
 - b. Centralized administrative authority and fiscal responsibility (includes previous position on centralized purchasing).
 - c. A professionally qualified administrator, reaffirmed in the form of a County Manager.
 - d. A merit system to enable appointment of qualified personnel
 - e. The short ballot election only commissioners, sheriff and district attorney

APPROVED: 1971, 1979, 1989, 1997 and 2000

UPDATES: 1979 – Position adopted; an increase in the number of policy-makers (commissioners) to five-part-time members

1981 – An administrator position was created by the county commissioners

1999 – Retain as written

2000 – Reaffirmed position for Home Rule; reaffirmed position for a short ballot;

electorate approved expansion to seven commissioners, with one being elected at large as chair, approved the short ballot and approved non-partisan election of commissioners

Local Government: Cities Cooperating to Reduce Fragmentation Impact

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports cooperative measures among the cities within the county to reduce the impact of fragmentation.

Cooperative measures among cities should incorporate informal cooperative mechanisms such as the Council of Mayors and the encouragement of participation within them. Should the cities initiate such measures, League supports city-city consolidation and the transfer of municipal functions to the restructured county.

APPROVED: 1971
1999: Retain as written

Local Government: Metro Approach to Problems

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports measures strengthening cooperation and coordination of approaches to metropolitan problems through interstate compacts, informal cooperative mechanisms and metropolitan study and planning.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County encourages participation by member governments in the Metropolitan Council of Governments (known as MARC – Mid-America Regional Council) and other informal cooperative measures. It encourages consideration of the findings and conclusions of MARC by local governments, officials and groups where such findings would be applicable.

APPROVED: 1971
FOOTNOTE: 1999 – in 1996, a Bi-State Sales Tax was approved by voters of Johnson County in Kansas and Jackson, Clay and Platte Counties in Missouri for the funding of the restoration and development of Union Station.

Local Government: Consolidation of Police Agencies and City Courts

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports consolidation of police agencies and city courts.

Support of consolidation should include the following:

1. Police agencies to insure uniform pay, increased training and centralized purchasing, with patrols operating at the local level
2. City courts, which necessitates uniform ordinances

APPROVED: 1971
1999 – Retain as written with emphasis on the need for cooperation

Local Government: Consolidation of Fire Districts

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports consolidation of fire districts in the county into one urban district and one rural district, retaining municipal fire departments.

The Board of County Commissioners should set the standards for county-wide district fire services and appoint the fire district boards. The county-wide standards should apply to selection and training of fire personnel, academic and hands-on firefighter training facilities, fire station location and response time for fire prevention education, code inspection, and protective devices. Standards should be developed for emergency medical services, personnel and Type II ambulances and equipment. Any differences between urban/rural area service and paid/volunteer firefighters must be taken into consideration.

Authority should be vested in the Board of County Commissioners to establish criteria for selection, training, appointment, and removal for cause of fire district board members; approve budgets, set tax levies and consolidate or dissolve districts.

The fire district boards and municipal fire departments should utilize the administrative services of the county basis of voluntary compliance as the county’s administrative capability is demonstrated. County administrative services available to fire district boards and municipal fire departments should include: personnel, purchasing, accounting, legal services, risk management, budgeting and planning, including provision for adequate water supply.

APPROVED: March, 1985
1999 - Retain as written with emphasis on the need for cooperation

Local Government: Charter Form of Government

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a charter form of government for Johnson County.

APPROVED: August, 1976
November, 1976 – A Johnson County charter was defeated in a public vote (42,225 – Yes and 44,868 – No)

FOOTNOTES: 1999 – Legislature authorizes creation of a Charter Commission. League should be prepared to study any recommendations prior to placement on ballot for approval. Time table is for such to occur in time for the November 2000 election.
2000 – Reaffirmed support for a Charter Form of Government

Local Government: Combine Management/Budget and Finance Departments

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports combining the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department into one department that would be headed by a County Controller who would report either to the Board of County Commissioners or the County Administrator, but to no lower level.

APPROVED: December, 1989
FOOTNOTE: 1999 – Departments of Management/Budget and Finance were combined to form Office of Financial Management

Local Government: Internal Auditor

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports the appointment of a full-time, professionally qualified Internal Auditor who would report directly to the Board of County Commissioners.

APPROVED: December, 1989

FOOTNOTE: 1999 – Retain as written

1999 – Internal Auditor and 2 Assistant Auditors are currently employed by the County; the Internal Auditor reports to the Board of County Commissioners

Local Government: County Budget and Financial Data

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports timely, understandable and complete budget and financial data of the programs of the County.

APPROVED: December, 1989

1999 – Retain as written

Local Government: Improved Budget System

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports:

1. An individually tailored county budget system which combines elements of program and performance budgeting.
2. Emphasis in the budgetary process on planning and setting of priorities for county services and expenditures as well as the efficient management of resources.
3. A separate capital improvements budget based upon formal planning and prioritizing capital improvement projects in the county, with public hearings before adoption.
4. Expanded opportunities for public input throughout the budget process. Public hearings for meaningful input should be held before the start of the process as well as toward the end of the process. More formalized methods for informing the public about the budget process are needed, such as newspaper articles, public budget workshops, hearings on cable television, radio announcements, etc. Budgetary materials should be made easily available to the public in advance of such meetings.
5. Formalized procedures to increase communication between citizen governing and advisory boards and the Board of County Commissioners. The citizen boards should be encouraged to hold their own budget hearings before submitting their budgets to the Board of County Commissioners.
6. Increasing county revenue through increased operational efficiency and the non-duplications of services.
7. The concept of user fees with formalized guidelines and non-arbitrary standards set and strictly enforced for their assessment.
8. A broad-based county tax mix with primary emphasis on non-*ad valorem* tax sources for new revenue.
9. The investment of the county's idle funds through a competitive bidding process and the aggressive management of county resources to maximize return.

APPROVED: March 1983

1999 – Retain as modified

Local Government: County Governing Boards

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports governing boards in Johnson County for Mental Health, Developmental Support, Library, Airport Commission and Parks and Recreation, retaining their independent status, policy-making and programming functions and the authority to appoint an executive director.

Administrative and financial policies should be subject to the approval of the Board of County Commissioners, with financial procedures to ensure accountability negotiated between the governing boards and the Board of County Commissioners.

The governing boards should be authorized to utilize county administrative components as the county's administrative capability develops.

To ensure the uninterrupted continuation of quality services, the use of centralized administrative support components should be phased in as the county demonstrates its capability to provide administrative services in a timely, cost-effective manner. Suggested tools for measuring increased county performance capability could include outside evaluation, computed cost-benefit analysis, and goals completed in a long-range plan for the development of the administrative division's capabilities. The League supports a written county policy setting forth formalized communication procedures between the Board of County Commissioners and the governing boards. The Board of County Commissioners should adopt a formalized procedure for the nomination, selection, appointment and training of governing board members. It should stipulate selection procedures in a written policy statement that would include:

1. Requirements for timely publication of board vacancies;
2. A method for individual filing, or a nominating procedure;
3. Interview and evaluations of candidates, based upon minimum qualifications and specific board needs;
4. Selection by total Board of County Commissioners, and
5. Formal appointment and prompt notification.

After appointment, required board training sessions should include a "boardsmanship" seminar, and specific agency-related orientation sessions.

Any proposed change in the status of the governing boards should receive adequate study, public hearings, and review by the governing boards and the board of County Commissioners before action is taken.

APPROVED: April, 1984
1999 - Retain as written
2000 – Reaffirmed support for Governing Boards and added the Airport Commission to the list of county governing boards with independent status. Changed name of Mental Retardation to the current name of Developmental Support

Local Government: Cultural/Recreational Facilities and Archive Repository

STATEMENT OF POSITON: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports:

1. Strong metropolitan area cultural facilities. There is a recognized interest in community-oriented cultural arts activities in Johnson County. There is no apparent need at the present time warranting the expenditure of public funds for the construction of a special facility.

2. Utilization of existing cultural/recreational facilities and resources; and development of projects within Johnson County built with private funds and operated with private and/or public monies as necessary to develop quality public programming.
3. A Johnson County archive repository.

APPROVED: December, 1984

FOOTNOTES: 1990 – Johnson County Community College trustees built the Cultural Arts Center with public funds
 1999 – Retain as modified
 1999 – Cultural Arts Center at Johnson County Community College renamed Carlsen Center; Archive Repository for Johnson County is located in the basement of the County Administrative Building in Olathe, KS

Local Government: Criminal Justice - Adult Corrections

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports:

1. No further construction of jails in Johnson County until other alternatives have been exhausted.
2. For offenders serving sentences in jail for less serious crimes, alternatives to be considered should include community based programs similar to the Kansas Community Corrections program for offenders who otherwise would serve time in prison. Other alternatives to be considered include:
 - Increased use of diversion
 - Pre-trial release under supervision
 - Citations
 - Release on recognizance
 - Increased use of bail
 - Intensive supervision
 - House arrest/Electronic monitoring
 - Work release
 - Restitution
 - Community Service
 - Other options
3. Equal programs for all jail inmates in accordance with their individual needs: training, counseling, and special provision for primary care givers of family members.
4. Efforts to improve coordination, cooperation and communication among the various agencies and services involved with the criminal justice system in Johnson County.
5. Development of a program for the utilization of carefully selected, well-trained volunteers to ease the workload of the professional staff of the corrections system, such as the Volunteers in Probation and Parole program sponsored by the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole.

Local Government: Juvenile Services

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports increased and improved facilities, services and programming (including probation, detention, foster homes, shelter care, and juvenile intake and assessment programs) for juvenile offenders and children in need of care (CINC).

To achieve this, the League recommends:

1. Appointment of Citizens Advisory Committees to work with the court and juvenile service providers to pursue all possibilities with regard to the care of juvenile offenders and CINC. These committees should be made up of interested citizens operating under effective guidance.

2. Efforts should be made to inform the public about all aspects of the juvenile justice and CINC systems. A program that emphasizes community-based services requires an informed citizenry and citizen input in policy making.
3. That the expanded detention center for Johnson County be adequately staffed and maintained and that emphasis be placed on education and treatment programs. CINC should be separated from juvenile offenders. More alternatives to detention should be developed.
4. An adequate budget to provide:
 - a. Sufficient staffing of juvenile service agencies and compensation of their staff
 - b. Twenty-four hour subsidized out-of-home placement for juvenile offenders and CINC
 - c. Continued budgeting of funds for emergency needs of children under the court's jurisdiction, such as clothing, medical needs, etc., and
 - d. An integrated, secure computer system to facilitate exchange of information among juvenile service entities.
5. Continued support of school and community programs that:
 - a. Educate youth and families in the prevention of crime, violence, and alcohol and/or other drug abuse, and
 - b. Meet the needs of students at-risk.
6. Adequate budget and staffing of Johnson County juvenile intake and assessment center(s) and such legislation as necessary to facilitate exchange of information among cooperating entities.

APPROVED: 1975
 1979 - UPDATED
 May, 1996 – Retain as written

International Relations: Impact of International Trade Agreements on the Local Community

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County believes that local government officials should inform themselves and their constituency of the impact of international trade agreements on Johnson County and its cities. A defined mechanism should be established whereby local government interests are represented in the development of these agreements.

In general, trade agreements must not weaken local laws in the areas of environment, health, safety and employment. However, there may be instances where, for reasons of strengthening, local laws may need to be changed to meet higher standards.

Although privatization and/or foreign ownership may not be appropriate for every service that local governments provide, in cases where either occurs, there must be strict community regulation and oversight regardless of the national affiliation of the service provider. All private corporations must meet the same standards, rules and quality expectations of our local laws and regulations, and be subject to the U.S. legal system.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County can help educate and inform citizens, who in turn should inform and monitor local government officials to ensure that they are aware and responsive to the potential impact of international trade agreements on Johnson County and its cities.

APPROVED: 2002

NATURAL RESOURCES

Land Use

BACKGROUND: The League's position on land use encompasses several studies in 1962, 1971, 1975, 1977, 1994 and 2003.

Land Use: County-wide Land Use Plan and Governing Structure

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports county-wide land use planning to include parks, road systems, flood control and low-income housing.

The League also supports a representative volunteer Planning Commission, professional planning staff and cooperation between the cities and the county toward long-ranging planning.

APPROVED: 1994

Land Use: Sunflower Army Ammunition Site

BACKGROUND: In 2002 – 2003, the League of Women Voters of Johnson County undertook a land-use study of the Sunflower site. At the time of the study, the site was under federal control, and was being considered for transfer to another entity.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League supports the following:

1. Planning Process:
 - a. that Johnson County have jurisdiction (land use/zoning) over any redevelopment at the Sunflower Army Ammunition site
 - b. that there be significant and broad-based input into the planning process for future development of the Sunflower site, to include non-governmental, community-based organizations
 - c. that financial incentives be considered only on a case-by-case basis and only if schools are not negatively impacted (the League is reluctant to support tax incentives, given the attractiveness of the location)
2. Remediation:
 - a. that there be a guarantee for remediation of the site to the highest level (residential use standard)
 - b. that remediation work should be protective of air and water quality for humans and wildlife, both on and off the site
 - c. that there be preservation of all undisturbed and uncontaminated areas of the site as natural wild-lands, with public access but only minimal development
3. Environmentally Sensitive Redevelopment:

The League supports environmentally sensitive redevelopment of the disturbed Sunflower Property including, but not limited to:

 - a. restoration of native landscapes, where possible
 - b. preservation of riparian corridors
 - c. maximization of green space/natural wild-lands for public use (with no organized recreation)
 - d. conservation of water by recycling, xeriscaping, storm water retention ponds, etc
 - e. minimization of waste
 - f. protection of air quality by development of public transit accessibility on the K-10 corridor
 - g. utilization of energy-efficient and environmentally friendly building designs and renewable energy sources

Land Use: Arterial Road System

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a county-wide arterial road system. The League supports an ongoing engineering survey of major roads in Johnson County to provide an arterial road system which is flexible enough to handle the growing traffic. Such a system should include:

1. Clearly defined administrative responsibilities and adequate financing
2. A county-assisted road system

PAST STUDY: 1971

APPROVED: 1994

Land Use: Park System

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports evaluation of park and open space needs in Johnson County and of methods of acquisition of open space. Support of an adequate park system should include:

1. Acquisition of additional park land and special attention to open spaces with minimum development
2. Coordinated and cooperative planning for park needs by the county and the cities with citizen input
3. Municipal responsibility for acquisition of neighborhood parks (larger cities should also acquire community-size parks)
4. County responsibility for large parks with a priority on acquisition of additional park land
5. County responsibility for recreation programs, financed through a combination of user fees and local taxes. However, the cities should continue to provide those recreation programs which use municipal facilities such as for swimming and tennis
6. Development of several small indoor recreation centers, geographically accessible to the users. School facilities should continue to be used.
7. Use of a variety of methods of financing acquisition of additional park land including annually budgeted funds, bonds, donations and gifts, federal grants, and mandatory dedication to require developers to donate land for parks to serve new subdivisions.

PAST STUDIES: 1971, 1977

APPROVED: 1994

1999 - Retain as written

Solid Waste Management: Solid Waste Disposal

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports planning for solid waste disposal and encourages recycling at the metropolitan level with county management of any land involved.

APPROVED: 1971

1999 – Retain as modified

Water: Water Management Policy

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports water management policies which will ensure efficient operation, long range planning and cooperation for adequate quality water supply, sewage treatment and storm water drainage.

The League recommends:

1. Education of the public regarding all water-related problems.
2. Support of the Blue River Basin Plan.
3. Awareness and support of zoning regulations for proper land use along living waterways to ensure water quality.
4. Work for changes in the provisions of K.S.A. 19-27, 129 as passed by the 1968 Kansas Legislature (concerns the establishment of a county level storm drainage program).
5. Work for one board to do overall county planning for water, sanitary and storm sewer districts.

APPROVED: 1975

UPDATE: 1975 – A referendum to fund recreation areas around the proposed reservoirs was voted down by public vote, thereby defeating the Blue River Basin Plan.
Late 1980s – A county-wide program of storm drainage was implemented by the cities and county.

Water: Sewers

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports equitable treatment of all sewer district patrons, both in forming districts and in assessment practices; competent professional management of all sewer district activities; strong enforcement of septic tank regulations to ensure that septic systems are properly designed and operated; and planning for orderly future growth.

1. Continued planning is needed to encourage orderly growth and avoid leap-frog development, and as far as possible, consistent with the free enterprise system. To ensure cooperation with other governmental units in order to coordinate the delivery of services such as sewers, streets, and water when land is developed; and to provide accurate projections of future growth in order to minimize the need for future construction projects that would require further assessments on property already assessed.
2. Benefit districts should be formed to include the entire watershed whenever possible. Geographical boundaries are more important than political boundaries or political considerations.
3. Exclusions should be permitted for some property owners within a proposed benefit district who petition to be left out. Such exclusions could be allowed for productive farmland and property with working septic systems. A set policy for allowing exclusions should be decided upon to eliminate arbitrariness and let the public know what to expect. An equitable buy-in policy should be established so that excluded property could enter the district at a later date.
4. Present regulations regarding septic systems should be strongly enforced. Septic tanks should be inspected when they are installed. The one-acre lot requirement is adequate for a single-family dwelling if the septic system is properly built and operated. All complaints about septic systems should be vigorously followed up and resolved.
5. Because situations may differ, several methods of apportioning costs and assessing for sewer construction should be used, including assessed valuation of land or land plus improvements, square footage and area equalization. A set of clear and detailed guidelines for the use of these methods should be established and followed to ensure that property owners within each district and from district-to-district are treated fairly and equitably.
6. The buy-in to an already established district should be changed to allow for an inflation factor without being unduly oppressive to the patron who is buying in.

7. Some system must be devised to notify potential buyers of property that a benefit district has been formed and an assessment is pending, such as filing a notice (in plain language) with the deed or requiring the seller to advise the buyer of all pending assessments.
8. The chief factor in assuring good management is competent professional staff, especially a director with financial and management skills. A management audit of the Unified Wastewater Districts by an outside agency would be advisable in view of past financial and management problems.

APPROVED: February, 1981

UPDATE: April, 1992 – A new sewer financing plan was approved by voters.

SOCIAL POLICY

Education: State Funding

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports state funding of two-thirds of the total operating fund budgets of school districts in Kansas, distributed through an equalization formula which makes equivalent resources available to all pupils regardless of the wealth of any particular school district.

1. Property valuation, to be a fair measure of district wealth, should be based on statewide, uniform criteria.¹
2. Taxable income, in conjunction with property valuation, is a valid measure of district wealth.²
3. State funding should average at least two-thirds of operating fund budgets across the state, not of each district's budget.
4. The League of Women Voters of Johnson County does not support an increase in federal funding of public education.

FIRST STUDY: 1979

1999 – Retain as modified

FOOTNOTES: The state equalization formula was last revised in 1992.

¹ The General Fund levy is based on statewide uniform criteria, but the local option budget is not.

² There is no wealth factor (percentage of taxable income) counted in the current formula.

State funding provides well over two-thirds of the operating fund budgets of the small school districts of Johnson County (Gardner-Edgerton, DeSoto and Spring Hill), but less than half of the Shawnee Mission District.

While state funding is a state rather than a local issue, it was felt that the importance of our schools justifies a continuing local Johnson County League position.

Education: Teacher Salaries

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports adequate salaries to attract and retain qualified teachers.

APPROVED: December, 1979

1999 – Retain as written

Education: County Education Above State “Norm”

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports continuing local efforts for education above the state “norm” in order to accommodate the varying needs of different local school districts.

APPROVED: December, 1979

1999 – Retain as written

Education: School Closings

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports the closing of

schools by the authority of the Board of Education when demographics and economics indicate a surplus of facilities. Community input should be an integral part of the school closing procedure.

The final decision to close schools should be made by the School Board on the basis of objective criteria, accurate data and public opinion. Ample opportunity for community members to express their feelings should be provided through public hearings.

APPROVED: March, 1980
1999 – Retain as written

FOOTNOTE: Regulations regarding the closing of schools are not set forth in state law (K.S.A. 72-8213 and K.S.A. 72-8136a, which allows Shawnee Mission to also close schools based on a vote of the School Board)

Education: Neighborhood Schools

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a school district objective of community schools replacing the present neighborhood concept, i.e., schools within walking distance. Transportation may be a necessary part of the community school concept.

Neighborhood schools are desirable for elementary students, but may no longer be feasible. The concept of a community school, no longer within the walking distance of every child, still implies that a school identity and a community of feeling exists among patrons and students of the school.

APPROVED: March, 1980
1999 – Retain as written

FOOTNOTE: This position reflects conditions in the Shawnee Mission schools of over 20 years ago. More study is needed, if deemed necessary, to determine the prevalence of “neighborhood schools” or “community schools” within the six school districts of Johnson County

Education: Alternative Education Programs

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports investigating alternative education programs due to opportunities provided by declining enrollment and shifting population.

Declining enrollment and shifting population can provide the catalyst for expanding educational offerings and serving the community as a whole in a positive way. When schools are closed as attendance centers, consideration should be given to:

1. Alternative elementary program offerings such as structure or open schools
2. Secondary skill centers for: Career Preparation, College Preparatory Programs, Expanded Programs in Math, Foreign Language, etc.
3. Leasing or selling
4. Use as Community Centers for social and recreational services

APPROVED: March, 1980
1999 – Retain as written

FOOTNOTE: The recommendations of this LWV-JC position have been applied in the 20-plus years since its adoption. The Shawnee Mission District has a special plan to accommodate elementary children with special needs. Spring Hill has a charter school at the elementary level. All districts have expanded secondary programs to include such

offerings at the International Baccalaureate program, ACT and SAT preparation programs, international studies, language programs, and programs for special needs students.

Education: Johnson County Community College

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a comprehensive public community college in Johnson County. (First approved in 1965)

The League supports the fundamental Mission Statement of Johnson County Community College (JCCC): “Johnson County Community College is a comprehensive public community college committed to serving the current and emerging needs of the residents of Johnson County for higher technical and academic education and lifelong learning. The college seeks to respond to the identified needs of the community by providing high-quality educational programs and student and community services that are accessible to all who can benefit from them.”

The League supports governance of the College under the existing system of local control (in December 1992), by a Board of Trustees elected by Johnson County voters, operating under the purview of the Kansas State Board of Education.

The League supports expansion of the JCCC Board of Trustees to seven members, elected at large.

The League supports adherence to a clearly defined Code of Conduct for the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees should give due regard to the needs of the students, the staff and the taxpayers of the county.

The League supports:

1. Placing no cap or limit on JCCC enrollments.
2. Maximum effective use of the present campus.
3. Continued use of off-site rented, leased or bartered space and utilization of state-of-the-art communications.
4. Appointing a committee to study the need for, methods of, and cost/financing consideration for the future expansion of the College. Interests represented should include JCCC trustees, administration, faculty, staff and students, Johnson County taxpayers, political leaders, business and professional people and other education professionals.
5. Having any expansion proposal which involves a large capital outlay being put to a public vote.

The League supports increased efforts by the College to gather management and cost information that would aid the Trustees in policy decision-making and the administration in operations decision-making. Information should be readily available to the faculty, students, staff and public as part of an effort to increase general awareness and a sense of openness in the College’s direction and management. This should include particular attention to improved community access to the policy-making process of the Board of Trustees.

APPROVED: 1993

UPDATE: 1999 – Governance was put under the Kansas Board of Regents

Child Care and Elder Care: Child Care

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports available, affordable and quality child care for all who need it, especially the single parent and low and middle income families.

There is a shortage of care for infants and handicapped children. There is a need for before-and-after school care. There is not enough licensing staff in the Health Department to assure timely and thorough evaluation of applicants in order to improve the quality of care. Training opportunities are not available on a continuing basis to upgrade the skills of center staff and family day care providers. There is a need for better communication about available providers as well as information to increase public awareness of child care problems in the county. Adequate funds are not available for subsidized child care and the SRS rates are far below market rates, acting as a disincentive to providers to accept these low-income children. Middle income parents find that child care costs are a strain on their budgets.

The county should fund an increase in licensing staff in the Health Department. The Parks and Recreation Department should expand its before-and-after school child care programs utilizing school buildings. The school systems should explore the options for using school buildings for child care in cooperation with county departments and not-for-profit service agencies.

Employers can assist their employees in the following ways: by providing flex-time, prenatal leave, job sharing, on-site child care and other child care benefits. Hospitals provide a valuable service when they include child care education in their New Parents curriculum. Religious organizations should be encouraged to continue to participate by providing facilities for quality care and by trying innovative methods.

APPROVED: April, 1989

Child Care and Elder Care – Elder Care

BACKGROUND: The League of Women Voters, in 2002, undertook a study to examine the planning in the county that would address the needs of an increasing senior population. In 2000, Johnson County residents aged 60 and older comprised 13.2% (59,446) of the county population, and there were 87,295 residents (19.4%) aged 45-49. These numbers indicate that over the next 15 – 20 years, the percentage of residents over 65 years of age will increase significantly. This study was limited to the three major areas of in-home care, transportation and housing. Due to the scope and complexity of the issues, nursing homes were not included in the study.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League supports cooperation among governmental agencies and private for-profit and non-profit groups working together to ensure that they meet the needs of seniors. The League of Women Voters supports enhancing the services needed for senior citizens to remain in their residence of choice for as long as it is safe. To achieve this, the League supports:

1. Augmenting in-home health-care services such as, but not limited to, nursing and rehabilitation care, and nutrition programs (i.e., Meals-on-Wheels). Recognition of the need for additional staffing for county public health nurses to provide medical services and to oversee medical care for seniors who remain in their homes is important in budget planning. More agencies and programs are needed which provide respite care for caregivers. Additional Case Managers within the Area Agency on Aging will be required to assist in coordinating services required by at-home seniors.
2. A transportation system that provides for the special needs of senior citizens, and is convenient, accessible and affordable. The League has long advocated for a metro-wide transportation program. Additionally, the findings of this study support the need for curb-to-curb service with wheel chair

accessibility and low-floor entries, as well as door-to-door service for seniors with special needs. The League supports an effective publicity program that provides information about routes, eligibility requirements and existing program options.

3. Community planning that encourages mixed-use buildings, including commercial and residential, with the goals of providing convenient access to services and creating the density required for public transportation. The League encourages construction of residences that takes into consideration accessible design. The League supports the enhancement of programs provided by the county and other agencies that offer home repairs, weatherization and other modifications that ensure safe and secure housing for seniors.
4. The interconnection of the vast array of services available in Johnson County. The interconnection of these services can be improved both through a centralized coordination of services and by making the information describing these services more broadly available to seniors, their families and caregivers.

APPROVED: 2004

Mental Health: Comprehensive Mental Health Services

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a program of comprehensive mental health services for Johnson County.

The program of services should include a full range of comprehensive mental health services as defined in Public Law 88-164. That is, inpatient care, partial hospitalization, emergency care, outpatient care, consultation and education, diagnostic procedures, pre-care and after-care, training for mental health professionals, rehabilitation services, research and evaluation.

APPROVED: November, 1966

UPDATE: 1962 – Johnson County Mental Health Center opened
1974 – The Rainbow Unit opened to serve Johnson and Wyandotte counties
1991 – New study and review; no position change
1999 – Retain as written

Mental Health: Expanded Study of Mental Health Services

BACKGROUND: In the early 1990s, the state recommended that the focus for mental health care be in community mental health centers rather than in state institutions. Several state hospitals for the mentally ill were closed, and community hospitals have reduced in-patient beds for treating patients with mental illness. In 2004-2005, the Johnson County League of Women Voters undertook a study to evaluate the effects of these changes on Johnson County residents seeking comprehensive mental health services.

STATEMENT OF POSITION (recommended as an update of our existing position) : The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports increased and improved facilities and services for persons with mental illness (brain disorders), increased funding directed toward mental health, greater efforts to educate the public about mental illness and availability of services for persons needing treatment, and enhanced training for law enforcement and other “first responders”.

To accomplish this, the League supports:

1. Facilities and services for crisis situations:
 - a. Re-establishment of the Crisis Stabilization Unit to serve a multi-county area in Eastern Kansas, including Johnson County, with funding provided by the state.

- b. A continuum of training for all first responders who interact with persons in mental health crisis.
 - c. Public awareness campaigns to educate school personnel, youth groups, clergy and other community leaders about crisis care facilities and services.
2. Appropriate housing for persons with mental illness:
 - a. Providing affordable housing funded by public-private partnerships that would include housing units for several persons (peer support groups) with appropriate supervision
 - b. Educating the community about the need for such group housing in residential areas, recognizing that sponsoring organizations must also be sensitive to surrounding neighbors
 - c. Using existing models to work within city/county zoning laws for such residential units
 - d. Equalizing the responsibility among municipalities to have housing units designated for persons with mental illness
 3. Sources of funding:
 - a. Increase funding from state government to counties to support the original plan to focus mental health care in community mental health centers.
 - b. Encourage county government to apply for grant monies targeted for services to meet the needs of persons seeking mental health care.
 - c. Work to achieve parity of insurance coverage for mental health conditions.
 4. Priorities for allocating funds:
 - a. Re-establishing the Crisis Stabilization unit.
 - b. Educating the public about all mental health services available in the county, particularly for young people, clergy, families and community leaders.
 - c. Developing appropriate housing via public/private partnerships.
 - d. Training of first responders on an ongoing basis.
 - e. Adapting the staff size of the mental health center to meet the increasing county population, increasing poverty in the county, and increasing ethnic/cultural diversity in the county.
 - f. Educating about early recognition of symptoms of mental illness and prevention of substance abuse.

APPROVED: 2005

Human Relations: Rape

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports research into the causes and prevention of rape, metropolitan cooperation in all aspects for handling of rape cases, studies of Kansas law changes, public education, and rehabilitation and treatment programs.

APPROVED: 1975

1999: Retain as written

FOOTNOTE: According to the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA), the issues raised in the 1975 statement of position are currently being addressed.

Health: Health Department Services

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports expanded and improved Johnson County Health Department services. Services and programs now offered should be supported, continued and/or expanded in the following ways:

1. Health services for adults and minors should continue to be available. These should include preventive health care, health education, prevention and detection of health problems.
2. Continue inspection of services to fully protect citizens.
3. Maintain full-time public health administrator and/or public health physician.
4. Increase visibility in the community
5. League supports a mill levy for adequate funding. There should be a charge for selected services, on a sliding scale, at the discretion of the Health Department.

PAST STUDY: 1974

APPROVED: 1993

Health: Emergency Medical Services

BACKGROUND: Since the League studied this in 1974, many of the criteria have been fulfilled.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports high-quality and adequately funded emergency medical services for Johnson County.

APPROVED: 1993

Health: In-Hospital Costs

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County is convinced that the present controls on in-hospital costs are inadequate.

The League encourages the continuation of voluntary efforts and supports incentives to control in-hospital costs. At the present time, the League opposes further state-imposed rate regulation

APPROVED: February, 1979
1999 – Retain as written

Health: Health Care Planning and Regulation

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County endorses health care planning and regulation at the level closest to the people. Informed participation of the community, both consumers and providers, is urged; the community needs to take more responsibility for health planning and cost awareness measures.

APPROVED: February, 1979
1999 – Retain as written

Health: Preventive Health Education

STATEMENT OF POSITION:
The League of Women Voters of Johnson County believes there is a need to create public awareness and knowledge of preventive health care measures and available health care services. Preventive health education programs should be increased in such community places as schools and businesses.

APPROVED: February, 1979
1999 - Retain as written

Mass Transit: Mass Transit

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Clay, Platte and Jackson Counties in Missouri, and Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas support the concept of expansion of a public mass transit system, and the need for the development of a rapid transit system for the Metropolitan Kansas City area.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports regional solutions to the problem of mass transit.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports governmental responsibility and funding at the federal, state and local levels in the construction and operation of a transit system. The League believes that the Federal Highway Trust Fund should be restructured so that highway funds are shared with mass transit. Federal funds should provide the main portion of construction costs with state or local funds providing the remainder. The League supports the issuance of general obligation bonds by the state provided they are amortized by sources other than the property tax. Possibilities for amortization could include increases in motor fuel tax (requiring restructuring of the State Highway Trust Fund) and motor vehicle registration taxes. The League also believes direct appropriation by the state is desirable.

Locally, League supports the concept of one regional authority governing mass transit in the Kansas City statistical metropolitan area. This authority should be empowered to issue general obligation bonds using sources other than the property tax to amortize these bonds. Once operating, a system should be financed mainly through fares plus subsidies from motor fuel tax, motor vehicle taxes, and/or direct appropriations.

The League supports provisions which take into consideration convenience and public appeal as the major factors for public acceptance and use of a transit system. Of primary importance is convenience as it includes accessibility, reliability, speed and compliance with the "Americans with Disabilities Act."

1. Accessibility implies proximity to main transit arteries or feeder arteries.
2. Reliability implies frequency and dependability of service.
3. Speed implies travel time from origin to destination which competes favorably with that of the automobile.

Of secondary importance are public appeal factors including reasonable fares, minimal comfort, personal safety, negative incentives and the speed with which the plan can be implemented.

1. Reasonable fares will encourage use of the system.
2. Minimal comfort implies heating and air conditioning.
3. Personal safety includes safe and secure stations and/or terminal points.

APPROVED: 1974
1999 - Retain as modified

FOOTNOTE: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County's position on mass transit is as valid today as when it was written in 1974. The Leagues in the metro area were correct to determine that mass transit is a regional issue and does not stop at county or state lines. Funding issues incorporated into the position are also relevant.