



The League of Women Voters of Dane County, Inc.

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Statement on Proposed Election Advisory Committee Presented to the Madison Common Council Organizational Committee, May 16, 2006

Running elections well must be a high priority of local governments. In Madison, most citizens have assumed that our voting procedures are fine. That may be true to a considerable extent. However, even here in Madison, the process has not been error-free and some voters have experienced difficulties in casting their ballots. Problems identified in recent elections include:

- Insufficient ballots at polling places
- Insufficient registration cards at polling places
- Inadequate training of poll workers
- Failure to add polling places in rapidly growing parts of the city
- Inaccessible polling places for those with disabilities
- Difficulties in obtaining absentee ballots
- People voting in the wrong wards

Within governmental circles, there appears to be recognition of the importance of addressing these problems. Three approaches have been offered for doing so:

- Establish an ongoing election advisory commission to evaluate voting procedures and make recommendations.
- Appoint an ad hoc working group to analyze existing problems and make recommendations for addressing them.
- Allow the new city clerk to work with his/her staff on these issues.

Given the hiring of a new Clerk, the third approach appears to be the speediest way to address these immediate issues. That is, if there is no delay in the confirmation of Ms. Hermann-Brown. Since her role will be solely that of Clerk, it seems reasonable to expect that she will be able to make election concerns a very high priority. Adherence to state law and adequate training of poll workers would likely solve many of the problems that have been noted. We trust that Ms. Hermann-Brown will find ways to gather public input on election problems. We also would encourage her to give serious consideration to the desirability of establishing a citizens group to advise on election issues.

If problems persist, then other approaches will be needed to ensure that our citizens encounter fewer problems on Election Day. An ad hoc working group could serve as a focal point for evaluating current procedures and recommending improvements. We would also like this group to consider whether an ongoing election advisory commission is needed.

The residents of Madison have the right to expect that elections will be properly conducted. To this end, we encourage the city to immediately begin preparations for this year's elections by:

- Developing a written election-day plan, similar to that proposed in the Governor's election reform bill
- Establishing a visible, clearly defined path for complaints about voting and responses to these complaints
- Creating an ongoing program of on-site, election-day quality control.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and we look forward to working with the city as it moves forward to address problems with voting procedures in Madison.

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