

Adopted 2020-21 LWVPDX Study of Police Accountability

Introduction: Why Is This Important?

Our 1982 position on the Portland Police Bureau is good, but it does not explicitly refer to accountability or civilian oversight of the investigation of citizen complaints. This proposed study is timely because of increased public attention to many of the elements in the city's contract with the Portland Police Association, the police officers' union/collective bargaining unit. In addition to the general accountability and civilian oversight issues, the community has expressed deep concern about the perceived lack of accountability in police use of deadly force resulting in the injury or death of citizens.

Title: Officer Accountability in the Portland Police Bureau

Scope: The study would focus on the disciplinary process, accountability, investigation of complaints about officer conduct, the use of the discipline matrix, conduct of the Citizen Review Committee, the Police Review Board, and policies around use of force. We would build on the work that the Justice Interest Group has done this year in joining with other groups to urge community involvement in setting priorities for the upcoming renegotiation of the police contract with the city council.

Outlook for Work:

- We would begin by reviewing historical documents: how the present disciplinary and investigation system was formed; how it has been modified over the years; the changes recommended by outside experts; and which recommendations have been adopted, which have not, and why.
- We would interview stakeholders inside and outside the bureau, carefully recording their suggestions for improvement.
- We would write a report covering the improvements made over the last few years that seem to be working, as well as a detailed description of the structural barriers to fair and consistent discipline of staff who take action that is not in line with bureau policy.
- We estimate that doing the study and writing the report would take about nine months. We hope to be ready to take consensus questions to Units in the spring of 2021.

Who Could Help:

- Debbie Aiona, LWVPDX Action Chair, has followed the Portland Police Bureau and the Citizen Review Committee for years. While she will not be a part of our study team, she is willing to be a resource and help us select historical documents to study, identify the persons who are most important to interview, and recommend which problems we should study in depth.
- Portland Copwatch is an organization that has been reviewing police misconduct and the use of deadly force for more than 20 years. Their founding member, Dan Handelman, is a rich source of historical information on progress and missteps in handling officer conduct that did not conform to bureau policy.

- The Oregon Justice Resource Center and the Albina Ministerial Alliance would have important input. Elected officials and community advocates have valuable perspectives to share.
- To prepare for the study, the Justice Interest Group is currently reviewing background documents. The tentative plan is for the study committee to start interviews in June, by phone if necessary.
- The following Portland League members have volunteered to serve on the study committee: Doreen Binder, Carol Landsman, Jo Senters, Amy Jo Butler, Frances Moore, Ruth Kratochvil, Barbara Ross, James Ofsink, and Civic Education Chair Nancy Donovan. Marion McNamara and Debbie Runciman are willing to help with editing, proofreading, and putting the final report together.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FROM UNITS AND THE WINTER PARTY

Suggestions for civic education programs, interest groups, or action may be approved by the Board if they conform with League Principles and there is sufficient member interest in the topics. The following recommendations do not need approval at the annual membership business meeting.

Recommendations for Action Committee Meetings & Civic Education Programs

1. *Planning/Civic Engagement (2009), Neighborhood Associations (2007)*. These could be topics for both action and civic education.
2. *Climate Change (2019) and Energy*. Winter Party attendees specifically addressed adding “Climate” to the LWVUS focus for *Making Democracy Work*. Suggestions also included a civic education program, perhaps jointly with Portland City Club, on these two topics and specifically to include information on liquid energy infrastructure.

Recommendations for Interest Groups & Civic Education Programs

1. *Economic Development (2015) and Port of Portland (1994)*. Consider forming an interest group and consolidating positions on Economic Development and the Port of Portland.
2. *Housing (2001), Affordable Housing Financing and Administration (1981) and Community Residential Facilities (2007)*. Determine if position updates are needed, which may lead to forming a study or interest group. Also, plan a civic education program on these topics and how they impact our community.
3. *Juvenile Justice (2006)*. The Justice Interest Group will: (1) monitor the implementation of bills during the legislative session, (2) take action on the expungement of juvenile criminal records, and (3) monitor the overrepresentation of minorities in juvenile justice implementation of Senate Bill 108.
4. *Teenage Girls at Risk (1995)*. Members supported the formation of an interest group to develop a strategy for issues to study or restudy, and for possible updates to our position.