

League of Women Voters of Portland Urges a “YES” Vote on Measure 26-217

The League has been involved in police oversight since the early 1980s when one of our members served on the commission that recommended Portland’s first police accountability system. We have continued to monitor the city’s oversight agency since then.

We support the Community Police Oversight Board charter amendment for the following reasons:

It is an important first step towards a truly independent and empowered oversight system.

- The proposal includes the essential features of the independent civilian agency the community has been seeking for years.
- The measure acknowledges that additional steps must be taken in order for this vision to become a reality, including changes to state law and the police union contract.

The measure remedies the shortcomings of our current system.

- The current oversight agency does not have ready access to police bureau files nor does it have the authority to compel officer statements, investigate deadly force cases, or discipline officers.
- In a number of officer misconduct cases, findings and recommended discipline are determined behind closed doors by a board made up of a majority of police officials.

Once all the pieces are in place, we will have a vastly improved system independent from other city bureaus and elected officials. The new system will remedy the historical challenges to holding police accountable by having the authority to:

- Conduct independent investigations including police shootings, use of force, and discriminatory policing.
- Compel officer and witness testimony.
- Require submission of relevant documents.
- Make policy recommendations to the police bureau requiring a response with a final decision by City Council.

The measure commits the oversight board to conducting its business at meetings open to the public and emphasizes transparency and regular reporting. The League believes democracy depends upon informed and active participation in government and the public’s right to know.

Vote “YES” on Measure 26-217 for Accountability and Transparency.