



League of Women Voters of Portland

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Board of Directors March 31, 2022

Debbie Kaye
President

To: Portland Charter Review Commission

Marion McNamara
1st VP

From: League of Women Voters of Portland

Chris Cobey
2nd VP

Debbie Kaye, President

Audrey Zunkel-deCoursey, Board member

Nancy Donovan
3rd VP

Re: Suggestions for charter revisions

Adrienne Aiona
Treasurer

To the Charter Review Commissioners:

Anne Davidson
Secretary

Thank you for volunteering to examine our charter and propose reforms to improve our city's form of government and elections.

Debbie Aiona

Carolyn Buppert

Judy Froemke

Linda Mantel

Amber Nobe

Margaret Noel

Audrey Zunkel-
deCoursey

As a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, the Portland League has been closely following the work of the Charter Review Commission and appreciates the opportunity to comment during this important civic process. Today, we wish to specifically address the recommendations that reinforce the Commission's Areas of Agreement. We urge the Charter Commissioners to consider these key reforms:

Off Board Leaders

Jen Jacobs
Budget

1. Establish the city council as a legislative body, not an administrative/executive one.

This change should allow policy makers to focus on hearing from constituents and addressing long-term, city-wide issues.

Ann Dudley
Nominating

Mary McWilliams
Membership

2. Institute a city manager.

We believe that centralizing administrative responsibility in the hands of a professional manager would provide for improved effectiveness and efficiency and allow councilors to concentrate on policy-making.

Philip Thor
Endowment Fund

3. Increase the number of city councilors to 10-12, plus the mayor.

Increasing the number of commissioners will likely lead to better representation for our city's growing population. (Changing the City Council to a legislative body would be a prerequisite for this reform.)

The League of Women Voters of Portland:

To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.

4. Retain election of the mayor and auditor on a citywide basis with Ranked-Choice Voting.

In these citywide single position elections, ranked-choice voting is an improvement over plurality voting because it enhances voter choice, addresses the spoiler effect, and discourages negative campaigning.

5. Enhance proportional representation by creating multi-member districts and using Ranked-Choice Voting to elect the City Council.

Multi-member districts with councilors elected using Ranked-Choice Voting would allow geographic representation as well as a Council that more proportionally reflects the people they represent.

These reforms are important to our organization on many levels. The League of Women Voters of Portland [supports](#) an election system that elects policy-making bodies that proportionally reflect the people they represent. We encourage electoral methods that provide the broadest voter representation possible and are expressive of voter choices.

In late 2019, the League of Women Voters of Portland released an [in-depth study report about Portland's government](#). Based on our research and collective discernment, we developed a position statement that summarizes the reforms we will advocate for:

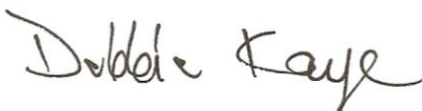
The League of Women Voters of Portland believes that a thriving, livable city requires a city government that meets these criteria: accountability, responsiveness, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and nonpartisanship.

Our members believe that to more fully meet these criteria, Portland needs to improve its government structure. The highest priorities for change are to improve citizen representation by increasing the number of commissioners, to institute a city manager, and to establish the City Council as a legislative or policy-setting body.

This year offers the chance for a historic change for our city. The voters of Portland are open to exploring new ways of building community and increasing civic engagement in how democracy is shaped locally. Let us seize this moment and address the most urgent needs for reform.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to public service.

Sincerely,



Debbie Kaye,
LWVPDX President



Audrey Zunkel-deCoursey,
LWVPDX Board Member