

Consider Concurrence with County Ethics Positions

Ethics – a much-used five-letter throughout Cuyahoga County – is receiving special attention within the League of Women Voters. On April 21, 2012, members of the LWV-Cuyahoga Area will be prompted to think about the role of ethics policies in local governments in a presentation by a three-League committee. The meeting will take place at 10:15 a.m. at the Martin Luther King Jr. branch of the Cleveland Public Library, conveniently located in University Circle at 1962 Stokes Blvd.

The LWV of Cleveland is already into the process of adopting a program position on governmental ethics policies. The Leagues of Cuyahoga Area and Shaker Heights are tuning in with plans to consider adoption of the LWV Cleveland Area position by consensus. Such agreements would allow the Leagues to actively promote certain provisions of ethics enforcement when the Cuyahoga County Charter Commission begins meeting in late 2012.

The April presentation and discussion will include a brief history of ethics law and enforcement in Cuyahoga county government to date, notable characteristics of ethics codes in similar counties across the United States, and examples and features of practicable enforcement mechanisms.

The Leagues in Cuyahoga County have been regular observers at county commissioner meetings for decades. Given this background, Leaguers were particularly interested when broad ethical lapses among public officials in the county began to surface publicly in 2007. In 2010, LWVCA's county government chair Lynda Mayer was tapped to lead a work group on ethics as part of the transition process to the charter form of government for the county. Members from all three Leagues participated in the work group's deliberations, wrote a model ethics code, and have continued to follow the progress of ethics legislation through County Council.