

## **ILO OPTIONS STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT**

The ILO Study Committee was established following last year's County Council, at which several members raised the issue of how well the existing ILO (Inter League Organization) structure was working. We have not heard anyone question the basic premise that it's necessary to continue addressing county and regional issues; indeed, the committee feels strongly that failing to monitor them is not an option. However, some people have suggested that with just two local leagues in San Diego County we no longer need the extra layer of a County League. They believe that other mechanisms for addressing regional and county issues would be more workable and less burdensome. Some members find paying yet another PMP (in addition to what we owe LWVC and LWVUS) to be a financial burden. Another concern (particularly among those who have served on a nominating committee) is that having three league boards in the county stretches our leadership pool, and that the two local leagues and the ILO often compete for the same talent.

As a result of these concerns, this study committee has been meeting for the last several months to explore the role and future of the ILO and to research and analyze how other areas address regional issues and what our options might be. After framing our task, we developed a script in order to interview county and regional leagues in California.

We conducted phone interviews with Orange County ILO (4 local leagues,) Los Angeles ILO (13 LL's,) LWV Santa Barbara, LWV Sacramento, the Alameda County Council (6 LL's,) the Santa Clara County Council (5 LL's) and the grandmother of them all, the Bay Area ILO with twenty local leagues. The Orange County and Los Angeles ILO's are most similar to us because their region is also the county. (However, we did not find a structure that resembles our situation, e.g. an ILO that encompasses just two local leagues.) The Sacramento and Santa Barbara local leagues do address regional issues, but that is not their primary function. The Alameda and Santa Clara County Councils are not formal leagues, but the presidents and vice presidents of the leagues within these counties meet regularly to address county issues. The unique entity in the state is the Bay Area ILO. It serves the two county councils mentioned above and the 11 LL's within those counties, in addition to 9 other leagues. It addresses regional bodies that encompass a multi-county region, such as the ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) and BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit.) All the other regional leagues focus on county government and the Board of Supervisors.

As is often the case with volunteer driven organizations, the issues that are priorities for these regional leagues correspond with member interest. If there is a group dedicated to the environment, that might take precedence. The same would be true for housing, or criminal justice. It's all about woman power and leadership, and most leagues report that having fewer members than in the past means not being able to cover issues as much as they would like. Most groups have observers and follow the agendas of the

regional agencies in their jurisdiction. All the leagues, as well as the two county councils, do have positions on which to take action. Most are quite visible in supporting or opposing ballot propositions. The most common areas of interest are transportation, health, water, and land use. The league presidents we interviewed were both proud of their accomplishments and honest about their shortcomings.

As part of our research we applied the same survey to our own ILO and looked into the history of our County League. The LWV of San Diego County was incorporated in 1974. It was established “to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues, to increase the knowledge and effectiveness of the Local League in the county and regional governments, and to coordinate League work on the county level.”

The County League (or ILO) has managed its money conservatively. Its budget is funded by an annual raffle and PMP’s from the member leagues. It has a large bequest fund that local leagues can access for projects with the objective of promoting the LWV. To date this fund has been underutilized, with only one grant application from each local league.

As with any formal league, the ILO has bylaws, board policies, and positions based on member study and agreement. They include positions on the structure of county and regional government, on natural resource issues such as transportation, parks and land use and on social policy issues such as mental illness and child advocacy. Our much lauded Fire Protection Study was adopted in 2010. Our position on mental health was first adopted in 1997 and updated just last year. Our recent study of Agriculture in San Diego County is scheduled for adoption in May, 2016.

As is the case with the other regional leagues we surveyed, the effectiveness of County League has depended largely on the quality of its leadership and the composition of its board of directors, which has varied widely over the years. Action often depends on the interests and abilities of the board members.

Recently we have taken action on land use issues, such as opposing the Lilac Hills Ranch project as inconsistent with the County General Plan, and on social policy (especially the issues of mental health, reproductive health and poverty.) The ILO also does voters’ service, such as keeping Smart Voter up to date with the cooperation of the County Registrar of Voters. In addition, the County League organizes programs with speakers at County Council and Convention and at our annual County League Day,

In light of the role of county and regional government in managing domains such as voter registration, social services, transportation and land use, it is now incumbent on us to come to terms with what structure is most workable for the LWV here in San Diego County in order to most effectively address these issues. However, it is not the role of

this committee to suggest *which* particular option to choose. Instead we will outline and define several possible alternative organizational structures:

- 1) The status quo. (See above for a history of the County League.)
- 1b) The status quo, but with no or a reduced Per Member Payment (PMP) from local leagues. An alternative method of raising funds would need to be established.
- 2) Merge the two local leagues, leaving only one league in the County.

The members of each of the two local leagues could continue to occasionally meet separately for member consensus and discussion, much like units do currently. However, there would be just one board. Ideally, some board members would focus primarily on local (either North County or San Diego) issues, such as education, with others carrying portfolios addressing issues of countywide concern, such as health or transportation.

This single board would be larger than that of any of the three currently existing boards, but the total number of board members required would be less than what we need now to staff three boards. It might appeal to members who are concerned about health, transportation, homelessness, affordable housing, water, land use, and other regional matters.

- 3) Disband the ILO, retain the two local leagues and establish a County Council.

This would most likely consist of the president or a designated delegate and a board member from each local league, plus a secretary/treasurer. The chair of the Council could rotate every year or two between the two local leagues.

The board member from each local league who would serve on the County Council could be someone with a particular interest and expertise in county and regional issues. Other members from the two local leagues carrying portfolios dealing with land use, transportation, social policy, health etc. could advise the Council and attend meetings as appropriate.

The purpose of the Council would be to establish a mechanism for the two local leagues to continue to work together on studies and programs as well as to address regional issues, but without the administrative burdens of being a formal league.

- 4) Disband the ILO, but retain the two local leagues to work cooperatively on

regional issues on an informal basis.

With this option the two leagues could continue to work together on the Smart Voter, and on study and consensus as they have recently on Agriculture in San Diego County (as well as the national agriculture study) and the two national studies on the Constitution and Money and Politics. Each league would continue to focus on matters of local concern. Regional and county issues could be addressed by having a regional coordinator in each local league who would specialize in county issues and work hand in hand with their counterpart on the other league board. As with the County Council option, members from either of the two local leagues carrying relevant portfolios could provide advice and expertise. Before addressing the County Board of Supervisors or any other regional agency, the local league wanting to initiate action would need to obtain approval from the other local league.

With any of the above (except for the status quo options) It would probably be advisable to let the ILO go dormant instead of shutting it down immediately. With a dormant ILO a skeletal board would be retained. (If option 3 were chosen, that minimal board could be the County Council.) Going dormant would give us adequate time to take the administrative and legal steps required to shut down a league and equitably distribute funds.

Also, if we were to choose any of the above options except the status quo, and later discover that we really do prefer the current ILO structure, it would be much easier to revive a dormant league than to reestablish one.