

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Support of:

1. A full- time Mayor with appropriate salary.
2. Short ballot for election of local officials and appointment of non-policy making officials with qualifications determined by interview and/or examination.
3. A County Health Department
4. The continuance of a local bus system

Items 1 and 2

The local League studied the short ballot – and executive responsibility – as part of state studies in 1961 - 1963 and 1963 - 1965. At that time it was generally agreed that election of non-policy making officers worked against attainment of the most qualified persons for these positions and tended to diffuse executive authority and responsibility.

In January 1968, by vote of the Common Council, three offices were made appointive (assessor, superintendent of parks and playgrounds, superintendent of streets). The following August the council voted to removed five more offices from the elective ballot and make them appointive (clerk, treasurer, comptroller, physician, health officer). A referendum by petition challenged the latter action and it was reversed by referendum vote in November 1968.

Having no local position, although favoring the short ballot at the state level, the League presented voters service information, explaining pros and cons of the issue for the referendum. In April 1969 a study was adopted: Advantages and disadvantages of the short ballot and feasibility of making the office of mayor a full-time position. (The office was then half-time and for a two- year term.)

Unit meeting in May produced consensus on these two positions. No position was taken on the length of the mayor's term, but it was felt that a city this size had responsibilities warranting a full-time administrator.

Item 3.

In 1974, the annual meeting adopted a study of the functions, divisions, and financing of local government. As part of the study, reports of the Portage County Health Task Force were reviewed and information condensed for the bulletin. At that time the municipalities (17 towns, 8 villages, 1 city) had separate health officers, many of whom never functioned. The county nursing service and county sanitarian were under the supervision of the health committee of the county board.

Consensus was taken through a September 1975 bulletin mail-in, and the above position received almost unanimous support. In November the League president spoke to a meeting called to determine the composition of the governing body of a proposed

county health department, concurring with state recommendations of one county board member, two physicians, one dentist, and three interested and qualified citizens. While League stressed the importance of citizen participation, none were included in the governing body as formed in May 1976.

Item 4.

Support for mass transportation has been part of the national EQ position. In the fall of 1971 the city council approved a six month trial period for a bus to operate from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. From this time on the local League supported the system and pushed for continuance and expansion. In September 1975 consensus was taken in regard to a local tax subsidy for PABCO, a privately operated bus system serving the city. Concurrence with the following was overwhelming: The city of Stevens Point should continue its present level of subsidy for mass transportation in the city, and should, if necessary, increase its subsidy in order to maintain mass transportation in the city. In April 1976 the above support position was adopted.

In the spring of 1978 the League supported the recommendations of the Transit Commission before the city finance committee and council. In March 1978 the council approved an application for a federal grant to upgrade the local mass transit system and purchase four new buses and related equipment.