



Local Position Handbook

**The League of Women Voters
of Johnson County**

Revised 2019

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GOVERNMENT

Inter-Governmental: Expanded Council of Mayors

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports an expanded Council of Mayors to include the County Commission:

1. The purpose of the expanded Council should be to provide communication, cooperation, and exchange of information between the units of government in the county.
2. The Council should remain informal in nature with one representative from each city and the County Commission.
3. Clerical staff should be provided by the county or hired by the Council.
4. The Council should be financed through dues assessed equally to each unit of government (and through federal grants, if available).
5. Agendas should be sent to the elected members of township board and school boards. These units should be encouraged to attend Council meetings and to provide information to the Council on common problems and take back to their units the concerns of the Council.

APPROVED: November, 1977

FOOTNOTES: 1999 – Retain as written. Liaison representative from Johnson County is the Chair person of the County Commission. Current name of the Council is Johnson/Wyandotte Counties – Council of Mayors

Local Government: Strengthening and Reorganizing County Government

BACKGROUND: The current positions are the composite of multiple studies of local government, beginning in 1952. Each study developed from conclusions of prior studies. Some positions were then placed in a more appropriate area under Natural Resources.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports strengthening and reorganizing Johnson County government. This should include:

1. Home Rule (Charter Government)
2. Separation of administrative and policy-making functions that include:
 - a. Increase the number of policy-making positions to seven, part-time members with one part-time member elected at large, to serve as a 4-year chair; members to be elected on a non-partisan basis.
 - b. Centralized administrative authority and fiscal responsibility (includes previous position on centralized purchasing).
 - c. A professionally qualified administrator, reaffirmed in the form of a County Manager.
 - d. A merit system to enable appointment of qualified personnel
 - e. The short ballot election only commissioners, sheriff and district attorney

APPROVED: 1971, 1979, 1989, 1997 and 2000

UPDATES: 1979 – Position adopted; an increase in the number of policy-makers (commissioners) to five-part-time members
1981 – An administrator position was created by the county commissioners
1999 – Retain as written
2000 – Reaffirmed position for Home Rule; reaffirmed position for a short ballot; electorate approved expansion to seven commissioners, with one being elected at large as chair, approved the short ballot and approved non-partisan election of commissioners

Local Government: Cities Cooperating to Reduce Fragmentation Impact

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports cooperative measures among the cities within the county to reduce the impact of fragmentation.

Cooperative measures among cities should incorporate informal cooperative mechanisms such as the Council of Mayors and the encouragement of participation within them. Should the cities initiate such measures, League supports city-city consolidation and the transfer of municipal functions to the restructured county.

APPROVED: 1971
1999: Retain as written

Local Government: Metro Approach to Problems

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports measures strengthening cooperation and coordination of approaches to metropolitan problems through interstate compacts, informal cooperative mechanisms and metropolitan study and planning.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County encourages participation by member governments in the Metropolitan Council of Governments (known as MARC – Mid-America Regional Council) and other informal cooperative measures. It encourages consideration of the findings and conclusions of MARC by local governments, officials and groups where such findings would be applicable.

APPROVED: 1971
FOOTNOTE: 1999 – in 1996, a Bi-State Sales Tax was approved by voters of Johnson County in Kansas and Jackson, Clay and Platte Counties in Missouri for the funding of the restoration and development of Union Station.

Local Government: Consolidation of Police Agencies and City Courts

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports consolidation of police agencies and city courts.

Support of consolidation should include the following:

1. Police agencies to insure uniform pay, increased training and centralized purchasing, with patrols operating at the local level
2. City courts, which necessitates uniform ordinances

APPROVED: 1971
1999 – Retain as written with emphasis on the need for cooperation

Local Government: Consolidation of Fire Districts

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports consolidation of fire districts in the county into one urban district and one rural district, retaining municipal fire departments.

The Board of County Commissioners should set the standards for county-wide district fire services and appoint the fire district boards. The county-wide standards should apply to selection and training of fire personnel, academic and hands-on firefighter training facilities, fire station location and response time for fire prevention education, code inspection, and protective devices. Standards should be developed for emergency medical services, personnel and Type II ambulances and equipment. Any differences between urban/rural area service and paid/volunteer firefighters must be taken into consideration.

Authority should be vested in the Board of County Commissioners to establish criteria for selection, training, appointment, and removal for cause of fire district board members; approve budgets, set tax levies and consolidate or dissolve districts.

The fire district boards and municipal fire departments should utilize the administrative services of the county basis of voluntary compliance as the county's administrative capability is demonstrated. County administrative services available to fire district boards and municipal fire departments should include: personnel, purchasing, accounting, legal services, risk management, budgeting and planning, including provision for adequate water supply.

APPROVED: March, 1985
1999 - Retain as written with emphasis on the need for cooperation

Local Government: Charter Form of Government

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a charter form of government for Johnson County.

APPROVED: August, 1976
November, 1976 – A Johnson County charter was defeated in a public vote (42,225 – Yes and 44,868 – No)

FOOTNOTES: 1999 – Legislature authorizes creation of a Charter Commission. League should be prepared to study any recommendations prior to placement on ballot for approval. Time table is for such to occur in time for the November 2000 election.
2000 – Reaffirmed support for a Charter Form of Government

Local Government: Combine Management/Budget and Finance Departments

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports combining the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department into one department that would be headed by a County Controller who would report either to the Board of County Commissioners or the County Administrator, but to no lower level.

APPROVED: December, 1989
FOOTNOTE: 1999 – Departments of Management/Budget and Finance were combined to form Office of Financial Management

Local Government: Internal Auditor

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports the appointment of a full-time, professionally qualified Internal Auditor who would report directly to the Board of County Commissioners.

APPROVED: December, 1989

FOOTNOTE: 1999 – Retain as written

1999 – Internal Auditor and 2 Assistant Auditors are currently employed by the County; the Internal Auditor reports to the Board of County Commissioners

Local Government: County Budget and Financial Data

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports timely, understandable and complete budget and financial data of the programs of the County.

APPROVED: December, 1989

1999 – Retain as written

Local Government: Improved Budget System

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports:

1. An individually tailored county budget system which combines elements of program and performance budgeting.
2. Emphasis in the budgetary process on planning and setting of priorities for county services and expenditures as well as the efficient management of resources.
3. A separate capital improvements budget based upon formal planning and prioritizing capital improvement projects in the county, with public hearings before adoption.
4. Expanded opportunities for public input throughout the budget process. Public hearings for meaningful input should be held before the start of the process as well as toward the end of the process. More formalized methods for informing the public about the budget process are needed, such as newspaper articles, public budget workshops, hearings on cable television, radio announcements, etc. Budgetary materials should be made easily available to the public in advance of such meetings.
5. Formalized procedures to increase communication between citizen governing and advisory boards and the Board of County Commissioners. The citizen boards should be encouraged to hold their own budget hearings before submitting their budgets to the Board of County Commissioners.
6. Increasing county revenue through increased operational efficiency and the non-duplications of services.
7. The concept of user fees with formalized guidelines and non-arbitrary standards set and strictly enforced for their assessment.
8. A broad-based county tax mix with primary emphasis on non-*ad valorem* tax sources for new revenue.
9. The investment of the county's idle funds through a competitive bidding process and the aggressive management of county resources to maximize return.

APPROVED: March 1983

1999 – Retain as modified

Local Government: County Governing Boards

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports governing boards in Johnson County for Mental Health, Developmental Support, Library, Airport Commission and the Johnson County Park and Recreation District, retaining their independent status, policy-making and programming functions and the authority to appoint an executive director.

Administrative and financial policies should be subject to the approval of the Board of County Commissioners, with financial procedures to ensure accountability negotiated between the governing boards and the Board of County Commissioners.

The governing boards should be authorized to utilize county administrative components as the county's administrative capability develops.

To ensure the uninterrupted continuation of quality services, the use of centralized administrative support components should be phased in as the county demonstrates its capability to provide administrative services in a timely, cost-effective manner. Suggested tools for measuring increased county performance capability could include outside evaluation, computed cost-benefit analysis, and goals completed in a long-range plan for the development of the administrative division's capabilities. The League supports a written county policy setting forth formalized communication procedures between the Board of County Commissioners and the governing boards. The Board of County Commissioners should adopt a formalized procedure for the nomination, selection, appointment and training of governing board members. It should stipulate selection procedures in a written policy statement that would include:

1. Requirements for timely publication of board vacancies;
2. A method for individual filing, or a nominating procedure;
3. Interview and evaluations of candidates, based upon minimum qualifications and specific board needs;
4. Selection by total Board of County Commissioners, and
5. Formal appointment and prompt notification.

After appointment, required board training sessions should include a "boardsmanship" seminar, and specific agency-related orientation sessions.

Any proposed change in the status of the governing boards should receive adequate study, public hearings, and review by the governing boards and the board of County Commissioners before action is taken.

APPROVED: April, 1984

1999 - Retain as written

2000 – Reaffirmed support for Governing Boards and added the Airport Commission to the list of county governing boards with independent status. Changed name of Mental Retardation to the current name of Developmental Support

Local Government: Cultural/Recreational Facilities and Archive Repository

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports:

1. Strong metropolitan area cultural facilities. There is a recognized interest in community-oriented cultural arts activities in Johnson County. There is no apparent need at the present time warranting the expenditure of public funds for the construction of a special facility.
2. Utilization of existing cultural/recreational facilities and resources; and development of projects within Johnson County built with private funds and operated with private and/or public monies as necessary to develop quality public programming.
3. A Johnson County archive repository.

APPROVED: December, 1984

FOOTNOTES: 1990 – Johnson County Community College trustees built the Cultural Arts Center with public funds

1999 – Retain as modified

1999 – Cultural Arts Center at Johnson County Community College renamed Carlsen Center; Archive Repository for Johnson County is located in the basement of the County Administrative Building in Olathe, KS

Local Government: Johnson County Courthouse

STATEMENT OF POSITION: In 2014-2015, the Johnson County League undertook a study of the current court house and concluded that a new courthouse should be built. The League supports:

1. The construction of a single court house to accommodate the full range of cases. This optimizes the ability of judges and staff to interact more effectively and efficiently.
2. A building design and construction that takes into consideration the flow of the public within the courthouse such that it provides needed security, safety and privacy for all who must be in the courthouse. This is particularly important for those persons involved in criminal cases or other highly emotional cases, such as “child in need of care” cases, divorces, etc.
3. Design/construction that is environmentally responsible and meets ADA compliance standards.
4. Immediate action on this project. The current low interest rates and the availability of county reserves make this an optimum time to undertake this project. Regressive financing methods, such as a sales tax, should be avoided.

APPROVED March, 2015

Local Government: Criminal Justice - Adult Corrections

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports:

1. No further construction of jails in Johnson County until other alternatives have been exhausted.
2. For offenders serving sentences in jail for less serious crimes, alternatives to be considered should include community based programs similar to the Kansas Community Corrections program for offenders who otherwise would serve time in prison. Other alternatives to be considered include:
 - Increased use of diversion
 - Pre-trial release under supervision
 - Citations
 - Release on recognizance
 - Increased use of bail
 - Intensive supervision
 - House arrest/Electronic monitoring
 - Work release
 - Restitution
 - Community Service
 - Other options
3. Equal programs for all jail inmates in accordance with their individual needs: training, counseling, and special provision for primary care givers of family members.
4. Efforts to improve coordination, cooperation and communication among the various agencies and services involved with the criminal justice system in Johnson County.

5. Development of a program for the utilization of carefully selected, well-trained volunteers to ease the workload of the professional staff of the corrections system, such as the Volunteers in Probation and Parole program sponsored by the Missouri Board of Probation and Parole.

Local Government: Juvenile Services

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports increased and improved facilities, services and programming (including probation, detention, foster homes, shelter care, and juvenile intake and assessment programs) for juvenile offenders and children in need of care (CINC).

To achieve this, the League recommends:

1. Appointment of Citizens Advisory Committees to work with the court and juvenile service providers to pursue all possibilities with regard to the care of juvenile offenders and CINC. These committees should be made up of interested citizens operating under effective guidance.
2. Efforts should be made to inform the public about all aspects of the juvenile justice and CINC systems. A program that emphasizes community-based services requires an informed citizenry and citizen input in policy making.
3. That the expanded detention center for Johnson County be adequately staffed and maintained and that emphasis be placed on education and treatment programs. CINC should be separated from juvenile offenders. More alternatives to detention should be developed.
4. An adequate budget to provide:
 - a. Sufficient staffing of juvenile service agencies and compensation of their staff
 - b. Twenty-four hour subsidized out-of-home placement for juvenile offenders and CINC
 - c. Continued budgeting of funds for emergency needs of children under the court's jurisdiction, such as clothing, medical needs, etc., and
 - d. An integrated, secure computer system to facilitate exchange of information among juvenile service entities.
5. Continued support of school and community programs that:
 - a. Educate youth and families in the prevention of crime, violence, and alcohol and/or other drug abuse, and
 - b. Meet the needs of students at-risk.
6. Adequate budget and staffing of Johnson County juvenile intake and assessment center(s) and such legislation as necessary to facilitate exchange of information among cooperating entities.

APPROVED: 1975

1979 - UPDATED

May, 1996 – Retain as written

International Relations: Impact of International Trade Agreements on the Local Community

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County believes that local government officials should inform themselves and their constituency of the impact of international trade agreements on Johnson County and its cities. A defined mechanism should be established whereby local government interests are represented in the development of these agreements.

In general, trade agreements must not weaken local laws in the areas of environment, health, safety and employment. However, there may be instances where, for reasons of strengthening, local laws may need to be changed to meet higher standards.

Although privatization and/or foreign ownership may not be appropriate for every service that local governments provide, in cases where either occurs, there must be strict community regulation and oversight regardless of the national affiliation of the service provider. All private corporations must meet the same standards, rules and quality expectations of our local laws and regulations, and be subject to the U.S. legal system.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County can help educate and inform citizens, who in turn should inform and monitor local government officials to ensure that they are aware and responsive to the potential impact of international trade agreements on Johnson County and its cities.

APPROVED: 2002

NATURAL RESOURCES

Land Use

BACKGROUND: The League's position on land use encompasses several studies in 1962, 1971, 1975, 1977, 1994, and 2003, plus the 2011-12 modernization.

Land Use: County-wide Land Use Plan and Governing Structure.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports county-wide land use planning to include parks, road systems, flood control and low-income housing.

The League also supports a representative volunteer Planning Commission, professional planning staff and cooperation between the cities and the county toward long-ranging planning.

APPROVED: 1994

FOOTNOTE: As part of the 2011-12 modernization, the membership approved that this position and "Land Use: Arterial Road System" be combined with a future study on mass transportation.

Land Use: Sunflower Army Ammunition Site

BACKGROUND: In 2002-2003, the League of Women Voters of Johnson County undertook a land-use study of the Sunflower site. At the time of the study, the site was under federal control, and was being considered for transfer to another entity.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports the redevelopment of the Sunflower Army Ammunition Site so that it protects human health and the environment during the cleanup and in the future.

The League believes that the Sunflower Army Ammunition Site can be redeveloped in a sustainable way that addresses social, economic and environmental concerns both locally and regionally.

The League supports the following:

1. Planning Process:
 - a. That Johnson County have jurisdiction (land use/zoning) over any redevelopment at the Sunflower Army Ammunition site

- b. That there be significant and broad-based input into the planning process for future development of the Sunflower site, to include non-governmental, community-based organizations
 - c. That financial incentives be considered only on a case-by-case basis and only if schools are not negatively impacted (the League is reluctant to support tax incentives, given the attractiveness of the location)
2. Remediation:
- a. that remediation work should be protective of air and water quality for humans and wildlife, both on and off the site
 - b. that there be preservation of all undisturbed and uncontaminated areas of the site as natural wild-lands, with public access but only minimal development
3. Environmentally Sensitive redevelopment:
- a. The League supports environmentally sensitive redevelopment of the disturbed Sunflower Property including, but not limited to:
 - b. Restoration of native landscapes, where possible
 - c. Preservation of riparian corridors
 - d. Maximization of green space/natural wild-lands for public use (with no organized recreation)
 - e. Conservation of water by recycling, xeriscaping, storm water retention ponds, etc
 - f. Minimization of waste
 - g. Protection of air quality by development of public transit accessibility on the K-10 corridor
 - h. Utilization of energy-efficient and environmentally friendly building designs and renewable energy sources
4. Advocacy: Beginning in 2011, funding problems caused a hiatus in remediation work. Once remediation recommences, the League of Women Voters of Johnson County advocates that the previously agreed-upon acreage be deeded to Johnson County Park and Recreation Department for public use when feasible.

MODERNIZED: 2012

Land Use: Arterial Road System

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a county-wide arterial road system. The League supports an ongoing engineering survey of major roads in Johnson County to provide an arterial road system which is flexible enough to handle the growing traffic. Such a system should include:

- 1. Clearly defined administrative responsibilities and adequate financing
- 2. A county-assisted road system

PAST STUDY: 1971

APPROVED: 1994

FOOTNOTE: As part of the 2011-12 modernization, the membership approved that this position and “Land Use: County-wide Land Use Plan and Governing Structure” be combined with a future study on mass transportation.

Land Use: Park System

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports an adequate, accessible, affordable and sustainable countywide park and recreation system.

The League of Women Voters believes in ongoing evaluation of: (a) park, open space and recreation needs in Johnson County based on national standards (e.g., percentage or per capita land area dedicated to green space); and (b) methods of acquiring open space.

The League of Women Voters supports:

1. Acquisition of additional park land with special attention to open spaces with minimum development and to connectivity with existing park land for regional trail development.
2. Coordinated and cooperative planning for park needs by the county and the cities with citizen input.
3. Municipal responsibility for acquisition of neighborhood parks (larger cities should also acquire community-size parks).
4. County responsibility for large parks with a priority on acquisition of additional park land.
5. County responsibility for recreation programs, financed through a combination of user fees and local taxes. However, the cities should continue to provide those recreation programs which use municipal facilities such as for swimming and tennis.
6. Development of several small indoor recreation centers, geographically accessible to the users. School facilities should continue to be used.
7. Use of a variety of methods of financing acquisition of additional park land including annually budgeted funds, bonds, donations and gifts, federal grants, and mandatory dedication to require developers to donate land for parks to serve new subdivisions.
8. Use of a variety of public education methods about facilities and opportunities.

PAST STUDY: 1971, 1977

APPROVED: 1994

1999: Retain as written

2012: Modernized

Solid Waste Management: Solid Waste Disposal

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports long term planning and funding for sustainable and affordable solid waste management systems within the county.

The League of Women Voters believes that “reducing, reusing and recycling” solid wastes are critical to conserving resources, lowering energy needs and protecting the environment.

The League supports:

1. Oversight of all solid waste operations by the County
2. Solid waste plans which encourage waste reduction
3. Consistency of services county-wide
4. Reasonable equity in costs for waste management
5. Planning that coordinates with regional solid waste management efforts and includes public input and regular information to the public
6. Ongoing public education about best practices by consumers and commercial entities.

APPROVED: 1971

1999—Retain as modified

MODERNIZED: 2012

Water

Water Strategies

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports protecting the public health and promoting economic development through a cooperative framework by which the legally appropriate water entities provide Johnson County's residents with safe drinking water, wastewater handling, and stormwater management while safeguarding the environment.

The county's legally appropriate water entities are:

- a. Drinking water –WaterOne; Rural Water District 7; and Consolidated RWD 6
- b. Wastewater handling -- Johnson County Wastewater; the cities of Olathe, Gardner, Edgerton, Spring Hill and DeSoto. For those on or desiring septic systems, the Johnson County Wastewater is responsible.
- c. Storm water management – The county's Public Works Department and individual municipalities.
- d. Unincorporated Johnson County -- The Department of Planning and Development.

The League believes that Johnson County's legally appropriate water entities must assure that the following values govern their work:

1. Equity of service and costs (pay for what you use or benefit from)
2. Sustainability (technically doable and financially affordable for the next 20-30 years)
3. Payment flexibility for at-risk families and groups (e.g., individualized pay plans; some "scholarship" funds)
4. Ongoing diverse communications with customers and the public (e.g., the internet, social media, targeted mailings, traditional media)
5. Ongoing education of customers and the public (diverse methods and media, all ages)
6. Cooperative relationships (e.g., among governmental units, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders)
7. Congruency with county-wide plans concerning natural resources, land use and development such as Vision 2030.

The League supports these management criteria for the above legally appropriate water entities:

- Meeting or exceeding all national/state/local standards on quality, and meeting all regulations concerning permitting, controls, tests, audits, enforcement and penalties;
- Use of nationally known best management practices;
- Fees/rates cover true costs of service;
- Full public disclosure of financial and quality data and findings;
- User input about service, cost-benefits and future plans; and
- Incentives for and recognition of intergovernmental and other cooperative efforts

MODERNIZED: 2012 by combining Water: Water Management Policy (approved 1975, updated 1975) and Water: Sewers (approved 1981, updated 1992) into one position.

SOCIAL POLICY

Education

STATEMENT OF POSITION:

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County (hereafter referred to as LWVJoCo) believes all schools, public and private, should provide a quality education for all students to develop their greatest potential regardless of circumstances such as income, race, ethnicity, geographical location, or family background. LWVJoCo maintains that quality education is critical to the continued success of our county.

Education: State Funding

LWVJoCo supports suitable school funding as stipulated in the Kansas Constitution: “The legislature shall make suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the state.” While funding is a state rather than a local issue, LWVJoCo believes the importance of our schools justifies a continuing local Johnson County League position. LWVJoCo supports a funding formula that provides a high quality education for all students consistently and equitably applied across the state.

- LWVJoCo supports a state budget process that considers public education as the highest funding priority. LWVJoCo opposes diverting dollars from any other state funds for education.
- A valid measure of district wealth is a combination of income taxes and property valuations. In order to measure district wealth fairly, property valuation should be based on statewide, uniform criteria. State funding should average at least two-thirds of the district operating budget. LWVJoCo supports full funding of all state and federal mandates such as special education and college/career readiness programs.*
- LWVJoCo supports a K-12 school funding formula which includes weightings to meet needs of all students, such as enrollment, demographics, special education, and English language learning. We oppose funding through block grants.
- LWVJoCo supports a standard process for public participation in budget development which includes public notice when a budget is being prepared and an opportunity to participate in program and policy issues.
- LWVJoCo supports full funding for all-day kindergarten and early childhood education.
- LWVJoCo opposes granting tax credits to corporations for awarding scholarships and tax credits for any students in private or home schools.

FIRST STUDY: 1979

1999 – Retain as modified. 2015 – Retain as modified.

*Neither state nor federal government has ever fully funded special education.

Education: Public School Board Elections

LWVJoCo supports nonpartisan local school board elections.

NEW STUDY: 2015

Education: High Standards

LWVJoCo supports the use of national standards that provide a uniform body of knowledge and academic skills for all students, accompanied by flexibility for local school systems to determine how this body of knowledge and skills is imparted to students. LWVJoCo supports:

- Individualized learning focused on developing critical thinking and problem solving skills of students, as well as use of technology.
- Partnerships with local businesses formed to benefit student readiness for college and careers.

NEW STUDY: 2015

Education: County Education Above State “Norm”

LWVJoCo supports local efforts that allow all students to achieve at high levels and local efforts for education above the state “norm.” League supports such initiatives as strong curriculum development, fine arts programs, school safety procedures, and professional development.

APPROVED: December, 1979

1999 – Retain as written 2015 – Retain as modified.

Education: Pre-K – Early Childhood

LWVJoCo supports a free comprehensive and high-quality pre-kindergarten educational program for all children.

LWVJoCo also supports collaboration among a broad base of community organizations, social service agencies and the local school system to provide parents with programs to assist their children from birth to age 5 in acquiring the experiences that prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

NEW STUDY – 2015

Education: Teacher Employment

LWVJoCo supports competitive salaries in order to attract and retain highly qualified teachers.

APPROVED: December, 1979

1999 – Retain as written

League supports the decision of local school boards to implement due process rights for teachers.

2015– Retain as modified

Education: School Closings

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports the closing of schools by the authority of the Board of Education when demographics and economics indicate a surplus of facilities. Community input should be an integral part of the school closing procedure. The final decision to close schools should be made by the local school board on the basis of objective criteria, accurate data and public opinion through public hearings.

APPROVED: March 1980

1999 – Retain as written 2015 – Retain as written

FOOTNOTE: Regulations regarding the closing of schools are not set forth in state law (K.S.A. 72-8213 and K.S.A. 72-8136a, which allows local districts to close schools based on a vote of the school board.)

Education: Neighborhood Schools

In 1980 League adopted a position supporting community schools above neighborhoods schools because of feasibility. It was retained as written in 1999. That issue is no longer relevant in the county in 2015.

Education: Alternative Education Programs

LWVJoCo supports public school districts providing alternative education opportunities beyond the traditional school setting, e.g. credit recovery, technological and vocational programs, and online classes, provided that high standards are maintained.

LWVJoCo recommends home schooled students be required to take state assessments mandated for accredited public schools to show mastery of key skills/concepts before receiving a high school diploma.*

LWVJoCo recommends oversight of charter schools by local boards of education with approval from the Kansas State Board of Education. Adequate and equitable funding for charter schools should be accomplished without financial harm to traditional public schools.

LWVJoCo opposes the use of vouchers to support students in private and home schools.

*There are no restrictions on the curriculum or educational requirements for home-schooled students who typically receive a non-accredited diploma issued by their home school agency. They may also choose to take the GED. Those who

wish to attend a college or university take the ACT or SAT as an entrance requirement. Home-schooled students may participate part-time in the public school system.

NEW STUDY: 2015.

Education: Diversity

LWVJoCo supports greater attention to educational needs and achievement of racial and ethnic minority students. It recommends affirmative action programs to recruit qualified diverse staff and faculty. It also encourages staff development opportunities in the area of multicultural and diversity studies.

NEW STUDY: 2015

Education: Johnson County Community College

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a comprehensive public community college in Johnson County. (First approved in 1965)

League supports the implementation of “inspire Learning,” their Strategic Plan for 2014-2017.

Mission: JCCC inspires learning to transform lives and strengthen communities.

Vision: JCCC will be a national leader through educational excellence and innovation.

Values: Integrity, Collaboration, Responsiveness, Leadership

LWVJoCo supports local governance of the JCCC by a seven-member Board of Trustees, each elected at large without party designation by Johnson County voters. Operating under the purview of the Kansas Board of Regents, the Board of Trustees should give due regard to the needs of the students, the staff and the taxpayers of the county.

LWVJoCo supports:

- Open access, a relevant curriculum, affordable tuition.
- Suitable state funding for JCCC as stipulated in the Kansas Constitution in regard to higher education.
- Competitive salaries to attract and maintain high quality faculty.
- No cap or limit on JCCC enrollments.
- Maximum effective use of the present campus
- Continued commitment to state-of-the-art communications.
- Continued efforts by JCCC to gather management and cost information that would aid the Trustees in policy decision-making and the administration in operations decision-making. Information should be readily available to the faculty, students, staff and public as part of an effort to increase general awareness and a sense of openness in the College’s direction and management. This should include particular attention to improved community access to the policy-making process of the Board of Trustees.

APPROVED: 1993

UPDATE: 1999 – Governance was put under Kansas Board of Regents. Retain as modified in 2015.

Child Care and Elder Care

Child Care

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports available, affordable and quality child care for all who need it, especially the single parent and low and middle income families.

There is a shortage of care for infants and handicapped children. There is a need for before-and-after school care. There is not enough licensing staff in the Health Department to assure timely and thorough evaluation of applicants in order to improve the quality of care. Training opportunities are not available on a continuing basis to upgrade the skills of center staff and family day care providers. There is a need for better communication about available providers as well as information to increase public awareness of child care problems in the county. Adequate funds are not available for subsidized child care and the SRS rates are far below market rates, acting as a disincentive to providers to accept these low-income children. Middle income parents find that child care costs are a strain on their budgets.

The county should fund an increase in licensing staff in the Health Department. The Johnson County Park and Recreation District should expand its before-and-after school child care programs utilizing school buildings. The school systems should explore the options for using school buildings for child care in cooperation with county departments and not-for-profit service agencies.

Employers can assist their employees in the following ways: by providing flex-time, prenatal leave, job sharing, on-site child care and other child care benefits. Hospitals provide a valuable service when they include child care education in their New Parents curriculum. Religious organizations should be encouraged to continue to participate by providing facilities for quality care and by trying innovative methods.

APPROVED: April, 1989

Elder Care

BACKGROUND: The League of Women Voters, in 2002, undertook a study to examine the planning in the county that would address the needs of an increasing senior population. In 2000, Johnson County residents aged 60 and older comprised 13.2% (59,446) of the county population, and there were 87,295 residents (19.4%) aged 45-49. These numbers indicate that over the next 15 – 20 years, the percentage of residents over 65 years of age will increase significantly. This study was limited to the three major areas of in-home care, transportation and housing. Due to the scope and complexity of the issues, nursing homes were not included in the study.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League supports cooperation among governmental agencies and private for-profit and non-profit groups working together to ensure that they meet the needs of seniors. The League of Women Voters supports enhancing the services needed for senior citizens to remain in their residence of choice for as long as it is safe. To achieve this, the League supports:

1. Augmenting in-home health-care services such as, but not limited to, nursing and rehabilitation care, and nutrition programs (i.e., Meals-on-Wheels). Recognition of the need for additional staffing for county public health nurses to provide medical services and to oversee medical care for seniors who remain in their homes is important in budget planning. More agencies and programs are needed which provide respite care for caregivers. Additional Case Managers within the Area Agency on Aging will be required to assist in coordinating services required by at-home seniors.
2. A transportation system that provides for the special needs of senior citizens, and is convenient, accessible and affordable. The League has long advocated for a metro-wide transportation program. Additionally, the findings of this study support the need for curb-to-curb service with wheel chair accessibility and low-floor entries, as well as door-to-door service for seniors with special needs. The League supports an effective publicity program that provides information about routes, eligibility requirements and existing program options.
3. Community planning that encourages mixed-use buildings, including commercial and residential, with the goals of providing convenient access to services and creating the density required for public transportation. The League encourages construction of residences that takes into consideration accessible design. The League supports the enhancement of programs provided by the county and other

agencies that offer home repairs, weatherization and other modifications that ensure safe and secure housing for seniors.

4. The interconnection of the vast array of services available in Johnson County. The interconnection of these services can be improved both through a centralized coordination of services and by making the information describing these services more broadly available to seniors, their families and caregivers.

APPROVED: 2004

Mental Health

Comprehensive Mental Health Services

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports a program of comprehensive mental health services for Johnson County.

The program of services should include a full range of comprehensive mental health services as defined in Public Law 88-164. That is, inpatient care, partial hospitalization, emergency care, outpatient care, consultation and education, diagnostic procedures, pre-care and after-care, training for mental health professionals, rehabilitation services, research and evaluation.

APPROVED: November, 1966

UPDATE: 1962 – Johnson County Mental Health Center opened
1974 – The Rainbow Unit opened to serve Johnson and Wyandotte counties
1991 – New study and review; no position change
1999 – Retain as written

Expanded Study of Mental Health Services

BACKGROUND: In the early 1990s, the state recommended that the focus for mental health care be in community mental health centers rather than in state institutions. Several state hospitals for the mentally ill were closed, and community hospitals have reduced in-patient beds for treating patients with mental illness. In 2004-2005, the Johnson County League of Women Voters undertook a study to evaluate the effects of these changes on Johnson County residents seeking comprehensive mental health services.

STATEMENT OF POSITION (recommended as an update of our existing position): The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports increased and improved facilities and services for persons with mental illness (brain disorders), increased funding directed toward mental health, greater efforts to educate the public about mental illness and availability of services for persons needing treatment, and enhanced training for law enforcement and other “first responders”.

To accomplish this, the League supports:

1. Facilities and services for crisis situations:
 - a. Re-establishment of the Crisis Stabilization Unit to serve a multi-county area in Eastern Kansas, including Johnson County, with funding provided by the state.
 - b. A continuum of training for all first responders who interact with persons in mental health crisis.
 - c. Public awareness campaigns to educate school personnel, youth groups, clergy and other community leaders about crisis care facilities and services.

2. Appropriate housing for persons with mental illness:
 - a. Providing affordable housing funded by public-private partnerships that would include housing units for several persons (peer support groups) with appropriate supervision
 - b. Educating the community about the need for such group housing in residential areas, recognizing that sponsoring organizations must also be sensitive to surrounding neighbors
 - c. Using existing models to work within city/county zoning laws for such residential units
 - d. Equalizing the responsibility among municipalities to have housing units designated for persons with mental illness
3. Sources of funding:
 - a. Increase funding from state government to counties to support the original plan to focus mental health care in community mental health centers.
 - b. Encourage county government to apply for grant monies targeted for services to meet the needs of persons seeking mental health care.
 - c. Work to achieve parity of insurance coverage for mental health conditions.
4. Priorities for allocating funds:
 - a. Re-establishing the Crisis Stabilization unit.
 - b. Educating the public about all mental health services available in the county, particularly for young people, clergy, families and community leaders.
 - c. Developing appropriate housing via public/private partnerships.
 - d. Training of first responders on an ongoing basis.
 - e. Adapting the staff size of the mental health center to meet the increasing county population, increasing poverty in the county, and increasing ethnic/cultural diversity in the county.
 - f. Educating about early recognition of symptoms of mental illness and prevention of substance abuse.

APPROVED: 2005

Human Relations: Rape

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports research into the causes and prevention of rape, metropolitan cooperation in all aspects for handling of rape cases, studies of Kansas law changes, public education, and rehabilitation and treatment programs.

APPROVED: 1975

1999: Retain as written

FOOTNOTE: According to the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA), the issues raised in the 1975 statement of position are currently being addressed.

Health: Health Department Services

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports expanded and improved Johnson County Health Department services. Services and programs now offered should be supported, continued and/or expanded in the following ways:

1. Health services for adults and minors should continue to be available. These should include preventive health care, health education, prevention and detection of health problems.

2. Continue inspection of services to fully protect citizens.
3. Maintain full-time public health administrator and/or public health physician.
4. Increase visibility in the community
5. League supports a mill levy for adequate funding. There should be a charge for selected services, on a sliding scale, at the discretion of the Health Department.

PAST STUDY: 1974
 APPROVED: 1993

Health: Emergency Medical Services

BACKGROUND: Since the League studied this in 1974, many of the criteria have been fulfilled.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports high-quality and adequately funded emergency medical services for Johnson County.

APPROVED: 1993

Health: In-Hospital Costs

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County is convinced that the present controls on in-hospital costs are inadequate.

The League encourages the continuation of voluntary efforts and supports incentives to control in-hospital costs. At the present time, the League opposes further state-imposed rate regulation

APPROVED: February, 1979
 1999 – Retain as written

Health: Health Care Planning and Regulation

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County endorses health care planning and regulation at the level closest to the people. Informed participation of the community, both consumers and providers, is urged; the community needs to take more responsibility for health planning and cost awareness measures.

APPROVED: February, 1979
 1999 – Retain as written

Health: Preventive Health Education

STATEMENT OF POSITION:
 The League of Women Voters of Johnson County believes there is a need to create public awareness and knowledge of preventive health care measures and available health care services. Preventive health education programs should be increased in such community places as schools and businesses.

APPROVED: February, 1979
 1999 - Retain as written

Poverty: Poverty

STATEMENT OF POSITION:

- Employment: LWVJC supports Johnson County creating a Jobs Plan to reduce unemployment and to create new jobs.
- Housing: LWVJC supports providing a broad range of housing in Johnson County as recommended by the Johnson County Affordable Housing Task Force in 2008.
- Transportation: [Mass transit current positions] 1974, 1999-retain as modified (footnote p. 20) with increased recognition of its correlation with adequate employment and housing.

APPROVED: 2010 (with Membership Concurrence, 9/3/2010)

Poverty: Housing Affordability

STATEMENT OF POSITION: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

BACKGROUND: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County in 2017 undertook a study to examine the issue of housing affordability. Housing is considered “affordable” if housing expenditures are less than 30 percent of household income. Housing expenditures include rent/mortgage, utilities, taxes and insurance. In Johnson County, housing is unaffordable for nearly one in five homeowners with a mortgage and two in five renters. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017) Housing issues, including solutions, are complex and multi-faceted. While the housing sector is largely determined by the marketplace (developers, landlords, lenders and buyers/renters), public policy at all levels has the potential to improve the efficiency and equity of housing markets.

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports safe, decent*, affordable housing for people at all income levels. The availability of such housing within the county is integral to individual and community well-being.

The League supports the following:

- Increasing the county’s supply of renter and owner-occupied housing that is affordable by maintaining existing lower cost units and adding to the current supply.
- Revising zoning and housing regulations to allow more innovative building opportunities for the community and developers.
- Developing a county-wide housing plan which ensures that safe, decent, affordable housing will be available to households at all income levels now and in the future. The plan should include an implementation strategy, timeline and mechanism for regular reporting.
 - The planning should be convened by Johnson County government and involve all cities. Key stakeholders in the public, private and nonprofit sectors should be engaged in the process.
 - The housing plan should be data-driven and guided by best practices. The planning process should include data collection to assess the current inventory of rental and owner-occupied housing, housing costs, and gaps in housing to meet household needs based on demographics (including household composition and income); and an assessment of barriers, including current zoning and housing regulations.
 - Outcomes should include strategies to finance and build new lower cost housing units, strategies to maintain and improve existing housing, and model policies and ordinances for cities to consider.
- Establishing a Housing Trust Fund, a sustainable local dedicated funding stream, to issue grants and loans to support the private and nonprofit sectors in the rehabilitation and preservation of existing affordable housing, while stimulating construction of new units.

**Decent refers to the physical condition of housing. For example, is it in reasonable state of repairs; does it have reasonably modern facilities; are plumbing, heating, electrical systems in working condition?*

APPROVED: 2019

Mass Transit: Mass Transit

STATEMENT OF POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Clay, Platte and Jackson Counties in Missouri, and Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas support the concept of expansion of a public mass transit system, and the need for the development of a rapid transit system for the Metropolitan Kansas City area.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports regional solutions to the problem of mass transit.

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County supports governmental responsibility and funding at the federal, state and local levels in the construction and operation of a transit system. The League believes that the Federal Highway Trust Fund should be restructured so that highway funds are shared with mass transit. Federal funds should provide the main portion of construction costs with state or local funds providing the remainder. The League supports the issuance of general obligation bonds by the state provided they are amortized by sources other than the property tax. Possibilities for amortization could include increases in motor fuel tax (requiring restructuring of the State Highway Trust Fund) and motor vehicle registration taxes. The League also believes direct appropriation by the state is desirable.

Locally, League supports the concept of one regional authority governing mass transit in the Kansas City statistical metropolitan area. This authority should be empowered to issue general obligation bonds using sources other than the property tax to amortize these bonds. Once operating, a system should be financed mainly through fares plus subsidies from motor fuel tax, motor vehicle taxes, and/or direct appropriations.

The League supports provisions which take into consideration convenience and public appeal as the major factors for public acceptance and use of a transit system. Of primary importance is convenience as it includes accessibility, reliability, speed and compliance with the "Americans with Disabilities Act."

1. Accessibility implies proximity to main transit arteries or feeder arteries.
2. Reliability implies frequency and dependability of service.
3. Speed implies travel time from origin to destination which competes favorably with that of the automobile.

Of secondary importance are public appeal factors including reasonable fares, minimal comfort, personal safety, negative incentives and the speed with which the plan can be implemented.

1. Reasonable fares will encourage use of the system.
2. Minimal comfort implies heating and air conditioning.
3. Personal safety includes safe and secure stations and/or terminal points.

APPROVED: 1974

1999 - Retain as modified

FOOTNOTE: The League of Women Voters of Johnson County's position on mass transit is as valid today as when it was written in 1974. The Leagues in the metro area were correct to determine that mass transit is a regional issue and does not stop at county or state lines. Funding issues incorporated into the position are also relevant.