

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS WITHIN MICHIGAN**

**Statement of Position originally adopted 1963; revised and amended 1977, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1985, 1991, 1993, 1998, and 2009.**

### **LWVUS Principles**

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

LWVMI supports measures to allow flexibility in solving metropolitan area or regional problems, and to encourage orderly growth and efficient government:

- I. Full cooperation among governmental units.
- II. Coordination by the State of state agency policies and programs as they relate to both regions and to local governments. LWVMI actively promotes the coordination by state agencies of their rules and regulations for local governments.
- III. Long-range planning for all regions in the state. A regional planning organization is important to the process.
  - A. Membership in regional planning and development commissions (RP & Ds) should include local units of government, special purpose districts, community college districts, intermediate school districts, local school districts and citizens.

- B. Board members of the regional organization should be appointed by the governing bodies of the member units. LWVMI does not support direct election to membership in RP&Ds.
  - C. RP&Ds should be funded primarily through local assessments and then by state and federal appropriations. LWVMI opposes regional taxation.
  - D. The role of the RP&Ds should be advisory and/or that of review, and should include:
    - a. Regional planning in land use, economic development, farmland preservation, parks, transportation, housing, environmental functions (water and air quality, solid waste and water and sewage systems), health, law enforcement and population forecasts;
    - b. Review of local plans for conformity to regional plans;
    - c. Contracting with local governments and/or agencies for planning services.
  - E. Support legislation to permit formation of multipurpose districts and to authorize RP&Ds to coordinate special service boards. LWVMI opposes granting RP&Ds power of appointment of special service board members.
- IV. Machinery for long-range planning for metropolitan areas.
- V. County Government
- A. Choices for the reorganization of county government to include:
    - 1. The selection of an elected or appointed chief administrative officer (unified county government), and
    - 2. Self-determination by county charter.
  - B. All county governments should satisfy the following standards:
    - 1. Separation of legislative and administrative roles (with the possible exception of counties with small population);
    - 2. Provision of long-range planning for services by county or region; and
    - 3. Establishment of mechanism for implementing plans at county or other levels of government.

- C. The State constitution should permit counties to transfer the functions traditionally performed by the clerk, treasurer, sheriff and the road commissioners to positions or departments established by the county. If the functions are transferred, the county should empower its manager or executive officer to supervise and coordinate those functions.
- D. The State constitution should require counties to transfer the functions traditionally performed by the drain commissioner and the register of deeds to positions or departments established by the county and should empower its manager or executive officer to supervise and coordinate those functions.
- E. The State constitution should require counties to hold nonpartisan elections, and should permit counties to elect county commissioners either by districts, or at large, or by combination.
- F. State law should permit charter counties to choose whether the chief administrative officer should be an appointed county manager or an elected county executive.
- G. In addition to the standards listed in Sec. V.A., county charters should meet the following standards:
  - a. Central administrative control over county operations, county departments, appointive positions, boards and commissions in general;
  - b. Central administrative coordination of elective offices with the rest of county government.
- VI. LWVMI does not support any one single type of metropolitan government, but strongly recommends enabling legislation to allow flexibility for local areas to determine that form which best meets their needs.
- VII. Township government as an optional form of local government.
  - A. Township government is effective for rural areas which require limited functional services.
  - B. Township government is an alternative to city hood when it meets the following standards:
    - 1. Separation of legislative and administrative roles;
    - 2. Provision of long-range planning of services and their delivery.

- C. The state constitution should require township elections to be non-partisan.
  - D. The state constitution should require terms of township board members to be staggered.
- VIII. LWVMI supports sharing of services and consolidation of local governments.
- A. The state should provide incentives to encourage sharing of government services such as fire, police, parks and recreation, water, and sewage treatment among local units of government.
  - B. The state should provide incentives to encourage consolidation of local units of government.
- IX. A central role for the State Boundary commission in the determination of boundary adjustment proposals.
- A. Proposals for incorporation, consolidation or annexation should be subject to approval by the Commission before they may take effect.
  - B. Legislated criteria should be used when the Commission considers each proposal.
  - C. Qualified electors in all affected areas should be permitted to petition for a referendum on a boundary change proposal and to vote on the proposal.
    - 1. In consolidation proceedings, if a petition is filed, majority approval by citizens in each of the participating municipalities counted separately should be required.

***Future annexation decisions should be based on an urban growth plan for a multiunit urban growth area. The plan should be approved by a local urban growth planning committee composed of representatives of all of the governmental units. It should also be subject to the approval of the Boundary Commission and the regional planning commission. Qualified electors of the units included in the urban growth plan should be permitted to vote on the plan.***