

BERKS COUNTY LOCAL PROGRAM 2014-2015

READING CITY GOVERNMENT: (Proposed May 2000)

The League of Women Voters of Berks County will monitor the compliance of the City of Reading with the Reading City Charter, and review recommendations for changes of the Reading City Charter. Note: Voters in the City of Reading adopted the City Charter form of government in 1993. Throughout the adoption process the LWVBC studied and took action on any changes proposed by the Reading City Government Study Commission.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION: (Adopted April 1977, Revised May 1997)

The League of Women Voters of Berks County supports more effective intergovernmental cooperation and encourages joint solutions to area-wide problems without imposing a threat to local autonomy. We will study intergovernmental cooperation as it relates to our other local recommended program items.

LAND USE: (Adopted 1974, Revised 1994)

Land use decisions set the pattern of how a culture will develop and determine our very quality of life. The League of Women Voters of Berks County supports policies which protect prime farmland and open space, improve the availability of affordable housing, protect our limited natural and cultural resources, and provide incentives for development to occur in older urban areas where it is most needed. The League supports the establishment of a county or regional agency (which includes the City of Reading) to develop and enforce a comprehensive plan for zoning regulations in its jurisdiction, such as to strike a balance between development and preservation.

All zoning agencies should continue to have well-publicized public hearings, environmental impact analyses, and economic feasibility statements. Officials making decisions should disclose their real estate holdings within the jurisdiction.

The League will study and may support the concept of concurrence that requires that the infrastructure necessary to sustain a particular level of development be in place either before the development occurs or be phased in while the development is occurring. This allows local governments to use infrastructure to shape growth and reduces the expensive and wasteful situation where taxpayers foot the bill to provide the necessary road, sewer, and water after a development is in place.

Concurrence, coordination, consistency, and the cooperation of all participants need to be encouraged if good planning of growth is to be achieved. The League encourages governments to classify valuable open land as preserves and make them available for public use through tax benefit donation programs and outright purchase.

LIBRARIES: (Adopted February 1983, Revised 1999)

The League of Women Voters of Berks County supports a countywide library system, financed by the county general fund that meets state standards and includes the Reading Public Library as a district center. Libraries should be conveniently located throughout the county and should have hours and services adequate to meet the needs of the surrounding population. Professionals should run the library system, but volunteers should be encouraged.

The Berks County Public Library system and its members should meet the minimum state standards to receive the maximum amount of state aid. The League recommends that the

county, the city, the townships, and the boroughs all share in the financial support of the system to meet this goal.

The League supports the current electronic links among the libraries and information sources and the Internet. Communication and services to patrons may also be enhanced by cooperation within the library community, including public schools, colleges, and special libraries.

The League supports efforts to inform the public about the many valuable services of the public libraries in Berks County.

IMMIGRATION (Proposed May 2013)

The League supports immigration reform and will continue to participate when appropriate in local activities supporting this issue.

AGRICULTURE (Proposed May 2014)

We would like to explore this topic, which will be addressed by Judy Schwank, our guest speaker at the 2014 Annual Meeting, during the coming year. We will determine the focus of this topic during future meetings.