

League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County
Commentary on Proposed Amendments to the Santa Fe Home Rule Charter

A number of proposed amendments to the city's Home Rule Charter appear on the ballot for the upcoming municipal election. Based on studies and general agreement of members at the national, state, and/or local level, the League has adopted positions and principles related to these amendments. We hope you will consider them as you decide how to vote.

Amendments 1, 2, and 3, changes to referendum, initiative, and recall: The Santa Fe County League supports the rights of citizens to petition their government. We believe the number of required valid signatures should be high enough to prevent frivolous petitioning but low enough to be attainable. The proposed changes would improve upon the current requirement, and we support these amendments.

Amendment 4, public financing of municipal campaigns: The League has been and continues to be outspokenly in favor of campaign finance reform and public campaign financing at the national level and across the country at state and local levels. The League's positions on campaign financing support ensuring the public's right to know, combating corruption and undue influence by those with favors or money, maximizing fiscal accountability and transparency, and allowing maximum citizen participation in the political process.

Although the details of "meaningful" public financing in Santa Fe remain to be worked out, the League believes this amendment will provide a necessary first step to crafting policies that may align with our position, and we support its passage.

Amendment 5, ranked-choice voting: Members of the League at all levels believe it is best for an official to win with a majority of the votes cast, and if there is no one with a majority, that there be a runoff election. Although ranked-choice or "instant runoff" voting is considered an inexpensive method of runoff elections, the League has not yet studied what method of runoff is best, and so we have no position from which to advocate for or against this proposal. We urge voters to study the material provided by the City (and the League, in our Voter Guide available in libraries and other locations in the city) about this amendment.

Amendment 6, the powers and duties of the mayor: The League believes the Mayor should vote on all business before the Council, in order to provide a clear public record of his or her positions to the voters. This amendment does not reach our standard, but is an improvement over the current provision, and the League supports its passage.

Amendment 7, qualifications of the municipal judge: The League believes the qualifications for this position should include that a candidate be a member of the New Mexico State Bar. We support the passage of this amendment.

The League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County encourages informed and active participation in government and urges all eligible voters to familiarize themselves with these issues and to vote responsibly on Tuesday, March 4.

Submitted by Jody Larson, president of the League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County