

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF DANE COUNTY

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Statement in support of 2020 RES-126 PROVIDING FUNDING FOR THE DANE COUNTY CLERK TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO VOTING CREATED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Five years ago the League of Women Voters of Dane County and the NAACP Dane County Branch 36B joined together to form the Dane County Voter ID Coalition in order to combine resources to maximize our capabilities to assist voters confronted with then-new barriers to voting. Those obstacles, which disproportionately affect people of color, persons with low incomes, students, seniors, and persons with disabilities, are mostly still in place today, now multiplied and exacerbated by the existence of the coronavirus pandemic. After 5 years of intensive efforts to assist voters to prepare to vote by helping people assemble the documents they need to obtain a photo ID, accompanying voters to the DMV, helping people to register online or via paper application, helping to obtain proof-of-residence documents, and talking with thousands of voters, mostly face-to-face, we all must now make dramatic changes to the methods we use to assist voters.

We applaud the multi-faceted efforts of the County Clerk and municipal clerks to ensure that voters can cast their ballots without endangering their health. The League of Women Voters and the Dane County Voter ID Coalition are also committed to assisting voters in a way that is safe for both our volunteers and voters, and we are pleased to be able to partner with the Dane County Clerk on this important project. We need to provide an alternative to the tens of thousands of in-person contacts that we would ordinarily make with eligible voters, so we support County funding for an extensive campaign on social media and other platforms, using professionally targeted information and ads. Our efforts will be structured to leverage hundreds of hours of volunteer time while accessing media and management professionals. The selection of a full service marketing agency will be based in part on their willingness to donate some of their professional services, their ability to work to seek free or reduced-cost advertising from local media, and their knowledge of or associations with some of the low voter turnout communities we are trying to reach.

We also expect that the calls to our Helpline will increase dramatically, and will require a managed effort to coordinate responses by scores of well-trained volunteers to respond to the calls for assistance with registration, obtaining an ID, applying for an absentee ballot or providing a witness for voters' absentee certificate envelopes, practicing social distancing as needed. We learned from the April election that voters understand they will be safer from possible spread of Covid-19 if they vote absentee and don't venture out, even to find a witness.

We hope you will support funding for 2020 RES-126 providing funding for the Dane County Clerk to address barriers to voting created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thank you,
Christine Clements
LWVDC President