

Public Comment
League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
to the
Citizens Advisory Council
to the
Department of Environmental Protection
November 19, 2013

Good morning. I am Roberta Winters of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania for whom I am speaking. As we approach this season of gratitude and good will, the League expresses our sincere appreciation for the hard work you have done and continue to do for the people of Pennsylvania. Helping to provide oversight, to evaluate issues, to develop regulations, and to advise in environmental areas is an awesome and challenging task. Given your important mission, we offer a special thank you to Marjorie Hughes who, as executive director, has been most gracious and accommodating to the League. We, like you, will miss her competent guidance in the New Year and wish her the best in her upcoming retirement.

In regard to today's agenda, the League is delighted that you are considering the Right to Know Law and requests to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). We believe that *democratic government depends on informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that all governmental bodies must protect the citizens right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed action, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.*¹ We trust the actions of DEP will be consistent with this position. This is essential given your responsibility in assuring that all of us enjoy the benefits included in Article 1, Section 27, of the Pennsylvania Constitution.

As you review the Policy for Community Environmental Projects in Conjunction with Assessment of Civil Penalty, please consider the following questions:

- What determines an "appropriate" situation?
- Will it be based primarily on financial ability to pay?
- What other factors might determine its applicability?
- Will there be direct, hands-on involvement in such projects by those at the highest levels of organizations who may have been responsible for incurring such penalties?

Although the League applauds projects that enhance public health and the environment, the purpose of this policy should be to promote greater compliance as well as to provide alternative means to compensate for violations.

Finally, the League is eager to learn more about the National Rivers and Streams Assessment. As you may be aware, our Water Resource Educational Network (WREN) has worked for more than a decade with public officials and organizations to manage and protect our water resources. We anticipate that this evaluation will guide our efforts as

¹ LWV US position found at <http://www.lwv.org/content/citizen-rights>

we work to prevent nonpoint source water pollution and also protect public drinking water resources.² Through WREN, the League puts into deed the words of our national position. We are hopeful that you, like our members, support:

- water resource programs and policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality, water quantity, ground-water and surface water and that address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies;
- measures to reduce water pollution from direct point-source discharges and from indirect nonpoint sources;
- policies to achieve water quality essential for maintaining species populations and diversity, including measures to protect lakes, estuaries, wetlands and in-stream flows; and
- stringent controls to protect the quality of current and potential drinking-water supplies, including protection of watersheds for surface supplies and of recharge areas for groundwater.³

Thank you.

² See <http://wren.palwv.org/>

³ See <http://www.lwv.org/content/environmental-protection-and-pollution-control>