



Clemson Area League of Women Voters

P.O. Box 802

Clemson, SC 29633

Statement to the Oconee County Legislative Delegation

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

February 1, 2007

I am Reggie Turetzky, Board member and past President of the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area, which has been serving this area since 1968. The League is a nonpartisan organization that encourages active and informed citizen participation in government. We provide election-related services, as you know, but we also study and take positions on issues. Today I would like to urge your support for League positions in four specific areas.

The first issue is **electronic voting**. This issue is dear to the hearts of the League, because we are concerned about the safety and trustworthiness of the election process. I am sure that you have heard about problems with electronic voting machines. The League is still in the process of formulating its specific recommendations, but this election off-year is a good opportunity for the General Assembly to explore ways in which electronic voting can be made more dependable—perhaps with a voter-verified paper trail or by switching to an optical scan. The League's Eleanor Hare is a retired Clemson computer science faculty member who has devoted much effort to learning about these machines and the advantages and disadvantages of various systems and will be happy to provide you additional information.

The second issue is proposed **changes in the tax structure**. I know that the governor has proposed that we increase the cigarette tax and use the funds to reduce income taxes. I also know that with \$600 in "new money" there will be a temptation to use some of the funds for other kinds of tax relief, but I urge you to continue to resist annualization of one-time funds and to use the revenue instead for capital needs or enhancing the reserve funds. The League supports increasing the cigarette tax and indeed indexing all excise taxes for inflation, but has no specific recommendation as to how the revenue should be used, other than perhaps more adequately funding preschool, K-12 and higher education. We oppose piecemeal cuts in the income tax, which is a critical source of revenue, without a careful review of the overall tax structure and the effect on revenue in future years when the projections are much less rosy than for the current fiscal year. The League believes that we need a revenue system that is stable, equitable, supportive of economic development, and generates adequate revenue for public purposes.

The third issue is **home rule**. The League believes that elected officials at all levels need greater autonomy and flexibility to respond to the needs and desires of their citizens. We understand that there is a proposal to limit the ability of municipalities to charge differential rates for utilities, such as water and sewer, to nonresidents. We see this issue as merely a symptom of a larger problem, namely the difficulty that cities have in expanding and taking in their natural service areas. That difficulty is a result of both our state's extremely restrictive annexation laws and some degree of dual taxation for similar services provided by both cities and counties. We urge you to address this problem in a way that reduces the temptation or the necessity for some cities, including Anderson and Seneca, to charge higher utility rates for those who live just outside the city limits and who take advantage of its presence and its services without contributing to its support.

The fourth issue is **private school tax credits**. We remain opposed to any legislation that would provide tax credits for students attending private schools and thus reduce funding for public schools and undermine public education, a principal on which our nation was founded.

Thank you for your attention and for your commitment to public service.

**The Clemson Area League of Women Voters' membership includes Anderson, Oconee and Pickens Counties**