

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
SUPPORTING AT-LARGE REPRESENTATION ON THE
PICKENS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Several Pickens county political leaders have commented negatively on the proposal to add a seventh at large seat to the Pickens County School Board of Trustees in order to create an odd number and avoid tie votes. The board consisted of nine members for a very long time, six by districts and three at large. Many of us were disappointed at the removal of the three at-large seats several years ago. With three at-large seats, everyone got to vote for four of the nine trustees, their own district member and the at-large ones, so we felt more ownership of the school board. At large members had to run countywide, so they were less focused on the needs and concerns of a small subset of Pickens County voters. At large members typically came from growing areas of the county, because the districts that were equal in population after the last census became less and less equal as the last Census receded into the past. For all these reasons, the League of Women Voters supports the addition of one (or three) at large members to the School Board.

One writer claims that polls show no evidence of interest or support for an at large seat. No one I know has been polled, either now or in 2008 when the vote was cast to eliminate the at-large seats. There is considerable support in the Clemson area to add at least one at large seat, and probably in other areas of the county as well. Another opponent of the at-large seats suggests that we create a new seventh district, which would be difficult to do. The current six districts are equal in population and correspond to the six County Council districts apportioned after the last Census, and were constructed with some difficulty. How do we carve one-sixth out of each of the current districts to create a seventh? Or do we redraw all the lines again?

The League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area continues to support adding an at large seat to the Pickens County School Board of Trustees and urges county citizens to let their legislators know that they, too, would like to be able to vote for more than just one member of the Board.

Submitted by Holley Ulbrich