

Why does the League conduct a study?

As you probably know, the League of Women Voters is nonpartisan but political.

Nonpartisan means we do not support or oppose any political parties and we do not support or oppose any candidates for office.

However, we are political because we do take positions on local, state and national issues. We support or oppose bills in our interest areas that are being considered by Congress or our legislature in California. We also take positions on local and state ballot propositions.

How does the League arrive at its positions on issues? Do we call a meeting and take a vote? No, the League actually has a carefully proscribed procedure. It's time-consuming and a lot of work, but we end up with a position that reflects the views of our membership.

First a group of League members does an intensive amount of research and collects as much information as possible. This information is presented to the membership in one or more meetings, such as this one. Research documents are made available for members to read. After reading the materials, listening to the reports and discussing the information, the members vote on the answers to consensus questions, which lead to the statement of a Position, or they vote on a Concurrence Statement, which is also a statement of a Position.

The adopted Statement of Position then becomes the basis and justification for supporting or opposing specific issues at the local, state or national level.

Why has the Orange County League decided to conduct a study on this particular issue?

Last year Orange County League of Women Voters was asked to take a position on the need for an ethics commission in Orange County. Up to that time, we had not conducted a study on this issue so we were not able to take a position.

In December, the League decided to launch a study. Members of the study committee, who represent each of the four local Leagues in Orange County, gathered a variety of documents and articles, and researched ethics commissions in other counties and cities. They attended meetings of other ethics commissions and interviewed members of those commissions. I hope you have had a chance to read the materials posted on the ILO website.

Here is some background on the issue:

Since 1974, Orange County has had a campaign finance ordinance called Time Is Now, Clean Up Politics, or TINCUP. It was written by Shirley Grindle and for the past 40 years she has almost single-handedly made sure that candidates for county offices follow those regulations. In order to assure that the regulations continue to be enforced in the future, she asked the Orange County Board of Supervisors to establish a county ethics commission. Two recent Orange County Grand Jury reports also recommended the establishment of an ethics commission.

The supervisors last fall decided that it would better to contract with the state Fair Political

Practices Commission (FPPC) to enforce county campaign laws. At that time, San Bernardino was the only county that was allowed to contract with the FPPC. Senator Lou Correa introduced a bill in the state legislature that would have allowed Orange County to contract with the FPPC as well.

The Orange County Supervisors then placed Measure E on the November 2014 ballot. Although the title of the measure implied that Orange County would get an ethics commission, it actually asked voters to approve the idea of contracting with the FPPC.

Before the election took place, Senator Correa's bill failed. So although Measure E was approved by the voters it could not go into effect.

At this point we do not have a contract with the FPPC and we do not have an Orange County Ethics Commission.

Shirley Grindle has written an ordinance that would establish an Ethics Commission for Orange County and she is trying to get the Board of Supervisors to approve it. If she does not succeed in convincing the majority to adopt this ordinance, she plans to launch a signature-gathering campaign to place the measure on the November 2016 Orange County ballot. When we complete this study and arrive at a concurrence, we will be able to take a position on any proposed measures dealing with this issue.