

Statement on Propositions Amending

*The Board of Education Policies on Candidates and Electioneering (2120.1)
and Voting Procedures - Voter Registration (2120.2)*

On behalf of the League of Women Voters Scarsdale, thank you for providing the opportunity for community feedback on the proposed changes to Board Policies 2120.1 and 2120.2.

The following statement reflects the consensus of members of the League of Women Voters Scarsdale at a League consensus meeting held on February 11, 2019. This statement comments on the proposed changes to Policies 2120.1 and 2120.2 of the Scarsdale School District Board of Education.

The League of Women Voters Scarsdale (the “League”) supports including the Proposition amending Policy 2120.1, entitled “Candidates and Electioneering,” on the ballot in May.¹ The portion of this policy affected by the Proposition is whether candidates running for the Board of Education (the “Board”) run for a specific seat or whether candidates run at large. The League recommends that the community vote in support of a Proposition that changes our current system to an at-large system.

The League notes, most importantly, that in practice, Board members currently do serve at large and are elected to represent the interests of the entire community. The League also notes that the change to an at-large system may simplify the ballot in the event of a contested election and reduce the likelihood of voter confusion.² Prior to the vote in May, the League encourages the Board to convey and publicize information to the community regarding this Proposition.

After outreach to all of the school districts in Westchester County, gathering information from a majority of those districts, and in correspondence with the executive director of the Westchester-Putnam School Boards Association, the League learned that approximately 90% of public school districts in Westchester and Putnam Counties currently have an at-large system for nomination and election to the Board of Education.³ As part of the League’s study, in addition to the aforementioned outreach and correspondence, we also reviewed New York State Education

¹ The League notes that the Proposition language is still in draft form as discussed at the Board of Education meeting on February 4, 2019.

² New York Education Law § 2018[b]. The League notes that School Board elections were run with a specific seat nomination system per New York Education Law. However, the next section of the law allows communities to change to an “at large” ballot if the voters so choose.

³ In correspondence with Lisa Davis, Executive Director of WPSBA, the League learned that approximately 10% of districts in Westchester-Putnam have a specific seat nomination process.

Law and policies of the New York School Boards Association, spoke with former Scarsdale School Board members, and spoke with the Deputy Council for the New York State Board of Elections.

The League also supports including the Proposition to Policy 2120.2, entitled “Voting Procedures,” on the ballot in May. The League recommends that the community vote in support of this Proposition to expand voter registration times.

The League recommends that in the Proposition, the Board clarify that the District Clerk referenced is located at the School District Offices, in order to differentiate from the Village Clerk. The League recommends that the Board publicly clarify which elections are covered by registration for school elections, as well as clarify to all community members that one does not need to register to vote in the school election if one is already registered to vote in the general election through the New York State Board of Elections. The League further recommends that, in the Proposition, the Board clarify the exact days and times of voter registration throughout the year including whether or not there is a cut-off date for registration for the school elections.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Leah Dembitzer, School Budget Study Portfolio Chair

LWVS

Linda Doucette-Ashman

Co-President, LWVS

Janice Starr

Co-President, LWVS

