

To: Members of the Hawaii County Charter Commission

From: Susan Dursin, Hawaii County League of Women Voters
P.O. Box 746
Captain Cook, HI 96704
(808)328-8514
sgd8@hawaiiantel.net

Date: December 17, 2009

Re: CA-12 Initiation of Charter Amendments or Revisions

Dear Chairman Haitzuka and Commission Members:

The Hawaii County League of Women Voters strongly supports the revision of Article 15-1, Initiation of Amendments or Revisions. The proposed changes regarding information given for verifying signatures, for the number of signatures required, and for the time allowed for verification are all positive steps toward making this article more user-friendly and more easily implemented.

However, some of the proposed language remains vague. The process of initiative is a complicated one, needing a step-by-step approach. In order to avoid confusion and frustration on the parts of both the initiating group and the Office of Election, the steps need to be spelled out in unambiguous detail.

Article 11, Initiative and Referendum, underwent careful scrutiny and revision at the request of the Hawaii County Council. As HCLWV president at that time, I worked with the rewriting committee for almost eighteen months. In representing League, my concern was that the article be as clear as possible. Only in this way could the public's access to government be protected without making the bar so low that a plethora of initiatives impede the working of government. The resulting amendment was accepted by voters on the 2008 ballot.

Now is the time to make Article 15 consistent with Article 11. The process should be the same whether the public moves to alter an ordinance or the charter. In this way, everyone knows what is expected and democracy can work smoothly.

Please review Article 11 as it now reads. You will see that it presents the process and the language that should be the template for Article 15-1.

Thank you for all the work you are doing.

Susan Dursin
Westside Coordinator, Hawaii County
League of Women Voters

COMM. 117