



LWV Corvallis

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February 5, 2018

To: Mayor Traber and Members of the Corvallis City Council:

From: League of Women Voters of Corvallis, Laura Lahm Evenson, President

Re: Voter Approved Annexations

The League of Women Voters is a strong proponent of citizen participation and access at all levels of government. Our local League's Community Planning Position supports "citizens' right to determine by ballot the expansion of municipal limits resulting from proposed annexations, delayed or otherwise, excepting only state-mandated annexations."

Based on this and other League positions, we urge the City to continue to honor Resolution 2016-14, adopted in May 2016, and the State Constitution Home Rule Charter provision while the City's appeal of SB 1573 is ongoing. We have several reasons for doing so:

- This action would clearly comply with Goal 1 of Oregon's State Land Use Law, which is Citizen Involvement. Goal 1 calls for "the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process."
- As a Home Rule City under the Oregon Constitution, Corvallis is entitled to facilitate development according to its community values. In the words of our retired state senator, Cliff Trow, "Citizens have as much right to participate in the future of their communities as do the developers and realtors who promote development to make money."
- Our nationally respected statewide land use planning system calls for local implementation, which is being systematically eroded by the State legislature.
- Corvallis has complied with State land use laws and its Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code policies have been approved by the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. The Charter Amendment requiring voter approval annexations has been challenged in court three times and ultimately upheld by the Oregon State Supreme Court (*Heritage Enterprises vs. Corvallis-708 P.2d 601 OR1985*).
- SB 1573 was hurriedly passed at the insistence of the Home Builders and Realtors Associations as part of the Legislature's 2016 affordable housing package. There was little public process and the new law went into effect immediately. This law does not do

what it ostensibly said it would do. It does not ensure that any affordable housing will be built.

- The urban myth that annexations in Corvallis do not pass at the ballot box is just that, a myth. In fact, as of 2014, over 40 annexations have been approved with only four failures. These annexations added nearly 4,000 acres to the City limits.
- We contend that our City's current shortage of housing is more likely due to the wider economic downturn that began in 2008 and the huge growth spurt of the university with no accompanying housing, rather than voter annexations.
- The "unless mandated by the state" clause in our Voter Annexation Charter amendment pertained to health hazard annexations. These annexations were handled on a case-by-case basis. It was not intended to apply to all annexations in the Urban Growth Boundary.

Regardless of potential appeals, until the appeal of HB 1573 is decided, the League believes that the City should follow its adopted and approved land use procedures. In addition, we urge you to stand firm in support of Oregon's Land Use Laws, our City Charter, and your Resolution 2016-14; and to continue the appeal of SB 1573.