February 5, 2019

Statement to Sun Prairie City Council in support of Election Improvement Plan.

The League of Women Voters of Dane County thanks the Sun Prairie City Council for its October 2, 2018, resolution commending non-partisan voter registration volunteers for their work and encouraging non-partisan voter registration at public events in Sun Prairie. Such outreach is core to our mission of Making Democracy Work®.

Understanding that the Council supports voting rights, the League urges approval of a budget amendment that would fully fund the Election Improvement Plan proposed by Clerk Elena Hilby to address long waits experienced by citizens wishing to vote. The Presidential Commission on Election Administration recommends voters wait no longer than 30 minutes to cast a ballot. The number of registered voters at Sun Prairie polling sites is nearly double the number recommended by MIT elections experts to ensure that voters will not wait longer than 30 minutes to cast their ballot. Doubling the number of polling places in Sun Prairie to eight would bring the city into compliance with recommended practice and address the concerns identified by League of Women Voters election observers at the November 2018 election.

A pay rate increase for election officials is a key part of the proposal that the League also supports. Polling places must have competent, well-trained election officials to accurately and efficiently serve voters. A higher pay rate could encourage a larger pool of applicants to manage the public-facing, complex, detail-oriented work and long hours required of election officials.

In volunteering to pilot electronic pollbooks, Sun Prairie has demonstrated its commitment to efficiently serving voters. Clerk Hilby’s proposal, employing more electronic pollbooks, will allow Sun Prairie to achieve the goal of meeting election administration standards, in a cost-effective way.

The costs associated with this expansion are significant, but reasonable. The alternative—denying the citizens of Sun Prairie the opportunity to vote without significant hardship in terms of wait time—is not acceptable. Those most affected by long wait times include parents with young children, people with disabilities, people with inflexible work schedules, and the elderly. The League of Women Voters is confident that the City of Sun Prairie wants to ensure that all its citizens have an equal opportunity to vote, regardless of age, disability status, work commitments, or family situation. The citizens of Sun Prairie deserve no less.