

CONSOLIDATION OF GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AND SHARING OF MAJOR GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES

The Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness (Lundine Commission) was established in April 2007 to examine ways to strengthen and streamline local government, reduce costs and improve effectiveness, maximize informed participation in local elections, and facilitate shared services, consolidation and regional governance. It noted in its 2008 final report that, "The vast majority of our municipalities were established and their boundaries set during the horse-and-buggy era. There are also outdated laws and offices for which no modern rationale exists. Over the years we have added to this outdated system, but rarely simplified, and today we have nearly 5,000 local government entities." The Commission went on to recommend the possibility of considerable taxpayer savings through the consolidation of governmental units and the sharing of major governmental services. In 2009 legislation was introduced and passed at the state level to streamline and facilitate the consolidation process.

Because the LWVNY had no position in this area, the delegates at the 2009 State Convention authorized a study of up to two years. The study committee decided to devote the first portion of the study to the development of standards with which to evaluate proposed changes to state law and proposals for local consolidation /sharing of services. After a study of approximately ten months, the board adopted the following position on consolidation/shared services.

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**Statement of Position
Adopted July 15, 2010**

The League of Women Voters of New York State (League) supports the efficient and effective operation of government. Consolidation¹ of governmental units and the sharing of major governmental services may be a way of promoting the efficient and effective operation of government. In achieving this goal, the League supports a cooperative and transparent process, in which citizens have sufficient and timely information with which to make informed decisions about proposed actions, and well-defined channels for citizen input and review. Administrative and fiscal efficiency should be included in the criteria by which local governments consider whether to consolidate or share major services.

The League supports a system of state-funded grants to local governments to study the feasibility of the consolidation of governmental units or sharing of governmental services.

In determining whether to support a consolidation/shared services proposal at the local level, as a way of making government more efficient and effective, local Leagues must consider both the adequacy of the process and the likely effects of the proposal's implementation.

In determining whether to support a consolidation/ shared services proposal as a way of making government more efficient and effective, local Leagues should apply the following criteria. While it is not necessary that each standard be met, the League recognizes that these standards represent potential benefits of consolidation, leading to more efficient and effective government:

- **Will the proposal result in projected cost savings and a positive effect on taxes over the long term;**
- **Will the proposal either result in an increased quality and/or efficiency of services or, at a minimum, maintain services at existing levels;**
- **Will the proposal fairly address disparities in employee contracts;**
- **Will the proposal result in increased social and economic justice;**
- **Will the proposal result in a reduction in the number of governmental entities?**

¹ *As used in this position, consolidation refers to both the process of consolidation and the process of*

dissolution.