



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO

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**LWVO Written Testimony on
Sub. H.B.64 – State Biennial Budget**

**Topic: Opposing Dissolution of the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission
Senate Finance Committee**

Carrie Davis, LWVO Executive Director

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Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO).

LWVO opposes the provision in the latest version of Sub.H.B.64 to dissolve and defund the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission (OCMC), and we urge you to remove this provision from the final version of the budget.

On the November 2012 ballot, Ohio voters were asked whether or not to hold a state constitutional convention. Article XVI, Section 3 of the Constitution of the State of Ohio requires this question to be put to voters every twenty years. For the last century, Ohio voters have said no. However, in lieu of a constitutional convention, the State of Ohio has repeatedly created a state commission to review the state constitution and recommend revisions. In the past, this commission has produced valuable recommendations. The 129th General Assembly created such a commission with passage of House Bill 188, as codified in Ohio Revised Code Sections 103.61 through 103.67, to create the OCMC to operate for a ten-year period until July 1, 2021. **When Ohio voters overwhelming voted no in 2012 to holding a constitutional convention, it was done so with the knowledge that the OCMC was charged with carrying out a review of the state constitution. To suddenly dissolve the OCMC six years early, with no stated rationale, is an affront to the voters of Ohio.**

Furthermore, the OCMC still has work to do. At the outset, the OCMC formed several committees, and each committee was charged with reviewing specific sections of the state constitution, accepting public testimony, and making recommendations on whether to propose changes to that section of the constitution. The OCMC committees have been and continue to carry out that charge, and they have done so with the understanding that they have several years in which to fully vet different sections of the Constitution and hear from the public. Cutting that work short, and abruptly so, only guarantees that their work will be left unfinished and that the resources spent on their efforts thus far will have been wasted.

Last, but not least, the proposed sudden and early dissolution of the OCMC sends a troubling message to the people of Ohio about how much this State values civic participation in government. Voters agreed not to call for a constitution convention but were told, at the time,

that they could offer input on the state constitution through the OCMC process. Eliminating that process essentially tells voters that the state doesn't want that input. **While many legislators have bemoaned the growing use of the citizen initiative process, eliminating OCMC sends a message to voters that the initiative is citizens' only option to call for constitutional changes. Is that a message we want to send?**

For the foregoing reasons, we urge you to leave the OCMC intact and remove from the budget the proposal to dissolve and defund OCMC. Thank you.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.