

Editor:

On January 16 the League of Women Voters of Lawrence Township testified before the Lawrence Township Council in support of Mayor Puliti's exploratory Clean Elections Advisory Committee that will study the feasibility of public financing of local elections.

The League sees this as an exciting opportunity. At this juncture there are more questions than answers on the quest for campaign finance reform and transparent, clean election processes. But an exploratory committee is a giant step forward in solving the dilemma of money influencing elections.

We commend the Mayor for the inclusion of minor or lesser known political parties and groups as members of the committee. League has long supported leveling the political playing field and including all campaign participants. We also agree with the Mayor that all conclusions and recommendations be decided by referendum. Let the voters of Lawrence Township resolve how to fund elections.

League is concerned that this serious issue has become fodder for partisan letters and articles before the committee has even met or recommendations submitted. We find this very disturbing and ask that everyone sit down together with an open mind and work to find a solution to money's influence on elections.

The League of Woman Voters, long a leader in the field of Campaign Finance Reform, offers our organization and resources in any way we can be of assistance.

Finally, we strongly urge the Council to broaden the scope of the ethics reform and pass a ban on dual office holding -- a practice that is a blot on New Jersey politics. Lawrence Township and Mercer County can be proud that we are one of the very few jurisdictions in the state where no local official holds more than one elected office.

We could be on the threshold of major, comprehensive ethics reform in the political arena. Let's make it work.

(signed by both presidents of LWW)