



TESTIMONY

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

INTERIM COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL SELECTION

I am Julie Lowenberg, testifying as a member and on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas. The League greatly appreciates this opportunity to address the Interim Commission on Judicial Selection, and we applaud the 2019 Texas Legislature for passing the bill calling for the appointment of the Commission and charging it with considering the fairness, effectiveness and desirability of selecting Texas judges through partisan elections.

As noted last year by Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht, the current Texas system is “among the very worst methods of judicial selection. ...When partisan politics is the driving force and the political climate is as harsh as ours has become, judicial elections make judges more political, and judicial independence is the casualty. ...A judicial selection system that continues to sow the political wind will reap the whirlwind.”

The Interim Commission has the opportunity to avoid the “whirlwind” by moving the Texas court system forward, away from big money and partisan elections toward a fairer system for selecting the most qualified, fair and impartial judges. The League has advocated for a fairer system since 1965 when it adopted its position on Judicial Selection through consensus of our statewide membership – adding a few tweaks over the years. We are pleased that, after a period of dormancy, the issue came to the fore in 2019 and that the Commission is taking on its charge with enthusiasm.

The League of Women Voters supports an effective, independent, qualified and inclusive judiciary for Texas and calls for selection of specified judges in the following manner:

- Nomination by a diverse, representative, nonpartisan commission, with appointment for a specific term or appointment by the governor for a specific term;
- Judges should be subject to retention or rejection in an unlimited number of periodic nonpartisan elections;
- This selection method should apply to the Texas Supreme Court, Court of Criminal Appeals and Courts of Appeals;
- Selection of state district court judges may be by non-partisan election or by appointment/retention;
- Judicial campaigns should be funded with public money.

Thank you again to the Commission for this opportunity and for your commitment to serving the people of Texas.