



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2011

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS SUPPORTS DISTRICT 97 REFERENDUM

Oak Park, IL - The League of Women Voters of Oak Park and River Forest supports the District 97 referendum for an increase in the limiting rate, as proposed on the ballot for the April 5, 2011 election.

Our support is based on our study of League positions on education, the District 97 public forum in November, District 97 Board meetings, and meetings with District 97 staff concerning district finances and potential budget cuts. The League also compared District 97 to benchmark communities in the Chicago area, looking at per-pupil expenditures, student-teacher ratios, salaries, and performance on the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests.

League members acknowledged that these are difficult economic times, but that the additional funding is necessary both to maintain and to improve Oak Park's schools, which also helps preserve property values. District 97 had not had an increase in the limiting rate since 1989. The district has been careful to husband its resources and has been cutting costs for many years. According to District 97, the increase will add approximately \$38 per \$1,000 of property taxes paid in Oak Park. District 97 needs the additional funding, not just to maintain the status quo, but to make improvements in the use of technology and meet new state requirements, to distribute resources equitably across schools, and to address the needs of Oak Park's children for their future in a global economy. League members also expressed broad support for extra curricular programs that augment a child's learning experience.

Oak Park has had an increase in students in recent years and, like all school districts, must comply with federal mandates such as No Child Left Behind and the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) for children with special needs. The federal government has not provided the full funding that was promised to support these mandates, thereby placing an additional burden on local tax payers. The recent increase in the income tax rate for the State of Illinois is unlikely to increase state funding to our public schools, although it will allow the state to make its payments in a timely manner (which has not been the case since 2008), and will also allow funding to remain at budgeted levels.

The schools are an important component of what makes Oak Park an attractive community. We believe it is essential to support our children by supporting our schools, giving them the resources required to provide a high quality educational program that will prepare our children for the 21st century.

About the League

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