

## MY VIEW

Submitted by Karen Mazza, President, The League of Women Voters of the  
Cape Cod Area

With the activation last week of a Charter Review Committee by the Assembly of Delegates and the support of that Committee's formation by the County Board of Commissioners, there is more than a glimmer of hope that important and helpful changes in the structuring of the Regional Government of Cape Cod might finally occur.

With the passage of 20+ years since the formulation of the Regional government and its first Charter, it's quite clear to the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area of the need to provide a more effective and efficient governance to meet the needs of the next 20 years. The League applauds the current effort. Ron Bergstrom, Speaker of the Assembly and chair of the new Charter Review Committee, has promised an open-ended review of the county's challenges and possible reform measures. He has promised to appoint members who will be committed to discuss all suggestions brought before the group and who will not be limited to previously held positions. For the process to be worthwhile there must be frank discussion and study of all possibilities. The resulting proposed Charter must be approved by the Assembly of Delegates, the Board of Commissioners, passed by the State legislature, and then subjected to a referendum by you, the voters, of this county. As the work progresses, the League urges the public at large and other civically-interested organizations to follow the process with equal openness to the possibilities and new efficiencies that a new structure might provide.

Since its beginning over 50 years ago, The Cape Area League has recognized and emphasized that this geographically unique peninsula/island must be seen and governed as a region. The Cape is an entity surrounded by environmentally-vulnerable waters, with a single aquifer, linked community by community from one end to the other. That is why

the Home Rule Charter approved by the voters in 1988 designated our name as the Cape Cod Regional Government.

Particularly since 2009 the League has promoted this understanding by presenting public forums focused on our system of governance and the environmental issues faced. Following our Forum in January 2011, when participants called for an active look at county structure and ability to meet challenges, The Board of Commissioners established a Special Commission on Governance to do just that.

In February 2012, that Special Commission composed of 26 leaders from various leadership experiences presented its final report to the Commissioners and the Assembly of Delegates. Regarding county structure the Special Commission recommended a structure based on a single strong Administrator and merging the current Board of Commissioners and the Assembly of Delegates into a single legislative body of 7 members, of which 2 members would be elected at large and 5 by districts representing sub- regions of the cape.

The LWVCCA membership reviewed and carefully studied this recommendation. It came to consensus in the late spring of 2012. We share that consensus with you now. We support the recommendation for a strong appointed County Administrator. We also supported the recommendation for a new and smaller (number unspecified) legislative body, merging the Board of Commissioners with the Assembly of Delegates to form a legislature to be elected on some form of a regional basis. The league now looks forward to new information, new ideas and proposals arising from the work of the Charter Committee.

The newly designated Charter Review Committee can make use of the work of the Special Commission, but is designed to have a broader purview. In spite of the

openness desired by Mr. Bergstrom, we regret that the Assembly of Delegates has already developed a position by approving a resolution in support of a “new” structure retaining the full 15 town representation while expanding the 3 member Board of Commissioners to 5 members. Our hope is that members of the Assembly will be able to set this resolution aside and freshly consider the total work of the Charter Review Committee as it completes its mission.

For those who have a concern regarding the loss of individual town representation should the legislative body be reduced in size, we point out that regional representation has worked very well on the state level. For example, Rep. Sarah Peake counts 8 towns in her lower Cape district; Rep. Randy Hunt has portions of 3 towns along with the whole of Sandwich. These members of our delegation and the delegation as a whole are responsive to the needs of the entire legislative district each serves and the Cape as a whole. No town doubts that their representative, or Senator Wolf, who represents the vast majority of the Cape, does not have their town’s point of view and interest in mind as they work for the common good of the Cape and the Commonwealth.

The League of Women Voters of the Cape Area believes a strong, regional and representative government is the best ticket to lead the Cape forward to achieve its full potential as a sustainable, productive region enhancing the life of its residents and visitors for decades to come. We urge all to follow closely as the work of the Charter Review Committee progresses and to contribute to this major effort as invited by the Committee.