



The League of Women Voters of Saratoga County

## Governance of Local Governments

### Statement of Position

*Adopted April 5, 2017:*

The League of Women Voters of Saratoga County believes that it is important to have a clear separation of powers, and checks and balances in County Government and therefore we support having an elected County Executive. Additional reasons for supporting a County Executive are that because the County Executive would be elected county-wide the Executive would be focused on the needs of the County as a whole; and because the term of office would be longer than the current one-year term of the Chair of the Board of Supervisors continuity and long range planning would be enhanced.

The League of Women Voters of Saratoga County believes that Cities in this County should separate their administrative functions from their legislative functions by having a City Council that makes policy and laws and *either* an elected executive or an appointed administrator to carry out administrative functions. The League supports this separation of functions in order to have a strong centralized administration, to have clear lines of responsibility and to eliminate waste.

#### **Background:**

In 2015 we adopted a study of whether local governments in Saratoga County (villages, towns, cities and county government) should separate executive or administrative functions from legislative (policy making) functions.

The study committee soon determined that the structure of government for Villages is specified in NYS Law, and calls for a mayor who serves as executive and Council members who make policy, a clear separation of legislative from executive functions.

Likewise, the committee determined that the structure of government for Towns is specified in NYS Law and consists of a Town Council, chaired by a Supervisor, and an elected Highway Superintendent. There is no clear separation of legislative and administrative functions, although many Supervisors function as though the law gave them executive powers.

Note that at the time of this study (2015-2017):

- a. the County is governed by a Board of Supervisors, with each Supervisor being elected by its Town or City, and casting a population- weighted vote on the County Board. The Supervisors (except those from the cities and one of those from the Town of Clifton Park) also serve as the Supervisor of their Town Government.
- b. The two cities in this County (Mechanicville and Saratoga Springs) are governed by a Commission form of government, with each Commissioner serving as a member of the City Council and also administering a Department.

The committee confined its study to the County government and to the government of the two cities in the county.