

SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE UPDATE FOR LWVOC BOARD

The LWVOC Social Policy Committee members include Karen Willis and Marc Lovett co-chairs: Linda Sutherland, Sara Segel, Pam Lennox, Michelle Levy and Karen Broussard. In 2009 the board approved a proposed project submitted by the committee to conduct an evaluation of the potential value that a Children's Services Council might provide the children and families of Orange County. It is our desire to continue to facilitate a community-wide evaluation and discussion of the merits of putting a CSC initiative on the ballot for consideration in Orange County.

The Social Policy Committee's first year of work included an analysis of the annual reports from the eight funded CSCs throughout the state. This analysis helped us understand the scope, focus, and impact of the many projects and programs these organizations have funded on behalf of children in their communities. We found many of their programs achieved measurable results, which had a significant impact on the quality of the lives of their target audiences.

Other committee activities have involved a combination of our members in meeting with organizations and individuals whom we've identified as critical partners in our evaluation. These organizations include the College of Health and Public Affairs at UCF; The Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation; The state association for Children's Services Councils; The Children's Cabinet of Orange County; and Family Services of Metro Orlando.

As a result of these meetings, we are in the process of convening a small panel of business executives who will identify what they consider to be important economic variables they and their colleagues believe are connected to quality-of-life issues impacting children in Orange County. Once we summarize this advice, we have assurances from UCF that they will sponsor an Economic Impact Study that documents how the presence or absence of various children's services affects key economic conditions in Orange County. EBCF is considering adding their support to this initiative.

In 2010 and 2011 the Social Action Committee will work to:

Better understand the unique needs of the children in our community who are underserved by the existing state and privately supported children's programs.

Oversee a study that identifies the economic impact associated with these unmet needs.

Facilitate the development of a broad community coalition to build a consensus on how we might make use of a CSC to respond to the unmet needs of OC children

Facilitate the development and administration of a taxpayer survey to determine their attitudes towards children's issues and the idea of resolving unmet needs via the enactment of an OC, CSC

Participate in a campaign to educate the citizens of our county to the unmet needs of our children as well as the probable tax implications and benefits of an OC, CSC.

The committee feels that the earliest such an initiative could even be considered for a vote in Orange County would be in November of 2012. In the interim, we feel there is a lot of productive work the committee can do to inform the LWVOC membership and the community at large on the challenges children face in our community.