



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF WESTCHESTER

200 HAMILTON AVENUE, WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK 10601  
Tel: (914)949-0507 Fax: (914)997-9354  
E-mail: [LWVWestchester@verizon.net](mailto:LWVWestchester@verizon.net) Website: [www.LWVWestchester.org](http://www.LWVWestchester.org)

September 18, 2009

The Honorable William J. Ryan and Members of the Board of Legislators  
The County Board of Legislators  
800 Michaelian Office Building  
148 Martine Avenue  
White Plains, New York 10601

**Re: Proposed Housing Settlement Agreement**

Dear Mr. Ryan and Honorable Members of the Board of Legislators:

For many years, the League of Women Voters® at all levels – National, State and County – has recognized the need for affordable housing and supported its creation. Based on this support, the League of Women Voters® of Westchester has monitored and observed all relevant housing entities, including the County's Housing Opportunity Commission, various committees of the County Board of Legislators, and local housing development proposals.

In doing so, we have come to commend the County's energetic efforts for affordable housing across the spectrum and throughout the County. This includes workforce housing for the teachers, firefighters, police, municipal workers and others on whose presence every community depends.

Since the 2007 filing of the lawsuit against the County by the New York City-based Anti-Discrimination Center, the League of Women Voters® of Westchester also has monitored all public discussion about it and, more recently, about the proposed Housing Settlement Agreement negotiated with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and issued on August 10, 2009.

Having done so, we note that in past years, communities throughout Westchester have benefited from funds from federal Community Development Block Grants for projects ranging from open space preservation to senior centers and housing. Without approval of this Agreement, all similar future projects could be in jeopardy.

With this background, the League has reviewed the Housing Settlement Agreement and requests clarification of certain issues.

Paragraph 5 of the Agreement limits the County's financial exposure from 2009 through 2014. The Agreement, however, fails to address or limit the County's financial exposure after the year 2014. The number of affordable housing units may not be reduced except as set forth in paragraph 15(a)(vi) which allows for a reduction in the case where "further extension of the time frames will not be sufficient to permit the possible satisfaction of the County's obligations." It can be expected that over time and with sufficient funding the units can be built. The League requests that future funding be determined so that the County may accommodate such funding without an increase in taxes or debt over a prudent amount. The League requests that the County request a side letter to the Agreement to clarify the financial requirements for the duration of this Agreement.

The League has been a long-time supporter of the Fair Housing Act and rejects any discrimination in housing on the basis of race or other protected classes as set forth in that legislation. Absent any demonstrated discrimination, the League encourages the County to request that the units contemplated under this agreement be offered to all classes in the appropriate income groups. Affordable housing in Westchester County is in such short supply that all income-eligible County residents should be able to benefit from a unique opportunity to live in these affordable housing units.

Finally, in observing the governmental process, the League notes that this Agreement, which affects municipalities throughout the entire county, has been negotiated without any input from the County Board of Legislators, even though legislative approval of the Agreement is legally required. During the preparation of the Agreement's upcoming implementation plan, the League urges greater collaboration between the Executive and Legislative branches to achieve a result that reflects the same open, deliberative process in which the legislators have been engaged in recent weeks.

The Executive Committee of the League of Women Voters<sup>®</sup> of Westchester County supports the Housing Settlement Agreement with the above reservations and looks forward to continuing to work with the County to successfully implement this accord.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Gose  
President

Karen Schatzel  
Director and Chair, Housing Committee

cc: **Members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators**

**Westchester County Executive**  
**The Honorable Andrew J. Spano**