

Date: March XX, 2026

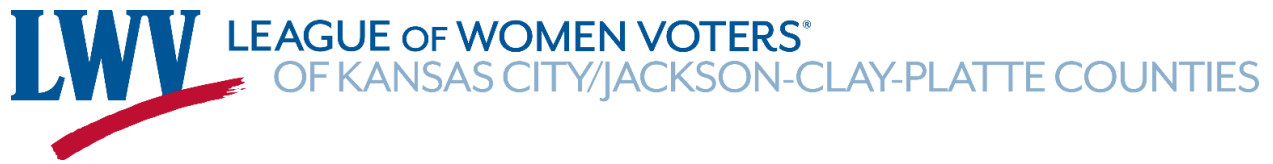
County Executive LeVota
County Legislature Chair Abarca
County Legislature Vice-Chair, S. Smith
County Legislators Anderson, Peyton, M. Smith, Huskey, Franklin, McGee & Lauer
Jackson County Courthouse
415 E. 12th St.
Kansas City, MO 64106

To Our Elected Officials:

The League of Women Voters of Kansas City, Jackson, Clay, & Platte Counties (LWVKC) maintains a strong interest in local government and actively tracks proceedings of local government bodies through our Observer Corps. Included in our observations over the past four years are the weekly meetings of the Jackson County Legislature. Our Observer Corps has identified fundamental procedural challenges that resulted in recent budget implementation problems and a myriad of other conflicts observed (see attached list).

We have come to understand that the Jackson County Home Rule Charter requires a formal Charter Review be conducted "From time to time, but no less often than every ten years..." (Article XV, Section 3). This requirement was added to the Charter in 2010, at which time "The Charter Review Task Force also recognized the need for the Charter to be thoroughly reviewed periodically to assure that it remains up to date." (Introduction). The last (and only) Charter Review was conducted at that time, in 2010. Since then, isolated Charter revisions seem to occur to address isolated issues (elect the Assessor) without the benefit of a comprehensive review process.

Jackson County Government, identified herein as both the County Legislature and the County Executive, has been in violation of the County Charter for the last five years by not empowering and funding a Charter Review Committee/Commission. Funds for a Charter Review were not allocated in the County Budget in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024, and 2025. Funds were provided in the 2023 County Budget, but there was no mention of a Charter Review process in the minutes of the 53 Legislative meetings held in 2023, except for an acknowledgement in December 2023 that funding for a Charter Review had been removed from the 2024 budget.



The LWVKC strongly recommends a Charter Review Commission be established as soon as possible by the County Executive with Legislative approval. Funding for this Commission should be included in and/or added to the budget as needed. The Commission should begin work as soon as possible with a goal of providing Charter revision recommendations for voter approval within a year.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) holds the position to “promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive.” The LWVKC requests the required Charter Review process be implemented quickly and in good faith. Upon conclusion of the Charter Review, we call upon the County Legislature to put before the voters of Jackson County proposed Charter revisions designed to provide clear solutions to past difficulties of County government, putting the best interests of all of Jackson County’s residents first.

If you have questions or would like to meet to discuss further, please feel free to contact me at president@lwvkc.org or Diane Golden at diane.c.golden@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diane Cordry Golden". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Melanie Busse
President
League of Women Voters of Kansas City/Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties

Diane Cordry Golden
Observer Corp

Potential Issues to be Addressed by Charter Review Commission

Budget Related

Consider:

- Clarifying the timeline for budget development and adoption by legislature with associated timeline for administration to develop revenue consensus amount along with accurate fiscal expenditure data YTD and proposed budget.
- Clarifying the authority of the legislature to adopt a budget that aligns with revenue consensus and fund balances available per fiscal expenditure reporting. This includes adding budget items over those in the proposed administration budget.
- Clarifying line-item veto authority of county executive. Is it the only veto option available for budget ordinance? Is there an automatic continuing resolution situation if the entire budget is vetoed or if no budget is adopted? If not, what does happen?
- Defining “emergency” and associated powers granted to county executive to expend funds under an “emergency” declaration.

Balance of Power – Checks and Balances

Consider options to ensure the legislature has sufficient resources to provide needed checks and balances including independent legal and fiscal staff (reporting to them, not the county executive) to support their work. Legal staff is needed to research and draft ordinances, resolutions, amendments, etc. and provide advice on procedures and protocol for legislative operation. Fiscal staff are needed to assist in development of the legislature’s budget by analyzing expenditure data provided by administration staff.

Term Limits for Elected Positions

Consider consistency of term limits for all elected positions. Currently the elected Prosecutor and Sheriff are limited to three 4-year terms in office. The Assessor is moving to an elected position also with a three 4-year term limit. The County Executive is the only elected office in the Charter with no term limit.

Special Elections

Consider allowing special elections for vacant positions rather than appointments that run the length of the unexpired term. Historically Jackson County has had many if not most of its elected positions filled by appointees that serve many years before running for election.

County Ombudsman

The 2010 Charter revision established the Ethics, Human Relations and Citizen Complaints Commission which functions as an ombudsman for the county. The function of this commission has been inconsistent, with appointment vacancies. Consider ways to strengthen this office and provide stability and power to insure viability of the ombudsman function.

Recall Related

Consider:

- Adjust timeline to agree with election requirements for federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (45 day) requirements and state requirements for 6-week absentee voting along with time for election boards to implement election. Ensure compliance with all other current state and federal voting requirements.
- Clarifying petition gatherer requirements, subject to Charter only or also state law.
- Eliminating veto option for County Executive for own position recall.