Position of League of Women Voters of Missouri on HB 634 – Charter Schools

The League of Women Voters of Missouri opposes expansion of charter schools in the state. If passed and enacted, HB 634 will allow charter schools to be operated in any school district in which at least one school building has received a score of 60% or less on its annual performance report. The League opposes charter school expansion because:

- Charter schools are not held to the same standards as traditional public schools. They are “freed” from having to comply with most state regulations that are designed to ensure a minimum level of adequacy, including being accredited by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. For example, 100% of faculty in traditional public schools must meet state certification standards, while only 80% of charter school faculty members must be appropriately certificated.

- Charter schools are not required to serve their “fair share” of students who present many challenges such as students with significant disabilities, students who are homeless, and students recently released from juvenile detention programs. This inequity results in higher concentrations of students that require significantly more resources in traditional public schools.

- Charter schools are governed by boards that are privately appointed, not elected, and such boards often employ private for-profit corporations to operate publicly funded charter schools. This significantly weakens accountability and contributes to citizens becoming “disinvested” from their local public schools.

- There is an unfounded belief that charter schools are superior to traditional public schools and therefore provide parents with an advantageous choice. Studies of charter school academic achievement do not demonstrate that they are better than traditional public schools. Parents expect superior outcomes when placing their children in charter schools. Unfortunately, such is often not the case and all too often charter school outcomes are actually inferior to those of traditional public schools.

For these reasons, the charter school program in Missouri is seriously flawed. The League of Women Voters of Missouri calls for the defeat of HB 634.