



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS URGES “NO” VOTE ON INITIATIVE 123 Good Government Organization Has Doubts About Proposal to Build a Viaduct-like Walkway

The League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County urges voters to reject a citizens’ initiative to rebuild a viaduct-like structure for a view park when the current viaduct is torn down.

Despite the initial appeal of a park said to be in the spirit of New York City’s Highline, the fine print in the initiative itself raises serious questions about its funding and governance,” said local League President Amanda Clark. “We urge voters to Vote No on Seattle Initiative 123.

The League believes citizens should be involved early in decision-making processes. The City of Seattle has held public meetings about the waterfront development plans since at least 2004, which culminated in guiding principles for the Central Waterfront Project. In contrast, the planning for I-123 has in general been guided by a few people and media outreach.

Initiative 123 has no identified funding source. Instead, the initiative states that its funds will come from the City’s general fund, which could put in jeopardy funding for other vital City services. It also states that it be allowed to take City-owned property deemed surplus or underused.

These are some of the specific statements in the initiative that have caused the League’s concern:

Article I: Downtown Waterfront Preservation and Development Authority (DWPDA) will seek private monies (without relinquishing control of the corporation) to carry out its purpose and goals or part thereof as well as money from government sources. **To this purpose, the City Council of Seattle shall make those funds available to the PDA from any source available, to do so including, without limitation, the general fund, grant funds from any public or private entity, and by issuing Councilmanic Revenue Bonds if advisable to facilitate the purpose of the DWPDA and its plan for the Seattle waterfront.** [emphasis added]

Article V, Section 24: Request that real or other property held by **any public agency** within the city limits of Seattle which is unused, under-used or surplus be made available to DWPDA. . . **without charge** if there is no legal prohibition.

Article VI, Section 1c: Defend and indemnify any DWPDA official (including employees), any former DWPDA official, and their successors, against all costs, expenses, judgments, and liabilities. . . .

In addition, the League thinks that PDAs are appropriate only where other means [of achieving a public purpose] have been explored and no reasonable alternatives have been found. It notes that

this PDA would be the only one to be created by election rather than chartered by a government entity. The League's position on PDAs states that they should:

1. Have a narrow focus and clearly defined purpose
2. Have an assured source of funding
3. Be subject to periodic charter review and termination
4. Have boards which are carefully selected, qualified, adequately trained and operating under uniform city guidelines
5. Be closely monitored by and held accountable to the city, especially in the areas of staffing, budget and audit
6. Provide sufficient communication with their constituency and the general public, including notice of meetings and activities.

The League thinks that the SDWPDA does not sufficiently meet all these criteria.

Although the League did not base its decision on design considerations, it is concerned that years of public planning would be thrown away, especially plans for the Aquarium. The League is on record of supporting the current Aquarium plan, which is to build the new additions on land, not over the water, and incorporate the buildings into the view walkway from the Pike Place Market.