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January 10, 2023

To: Chair Michelle Harris and Members of the Chicago City Council Rules Committee

Re: R2022-1116, Amendment of City Council Rules of Order and Procedure by modifying Rule 41 regarding requirements for direct introductions into City Council committees

Dear Chair Harris and Alders:

The League of Women Voters of Chicago urges that the referenced matter be placed on the agenda for the Rules Committee meeting this month or the next meeting. We also urge that all members vote to approve this amendment to Rule 41, and then again vote to approve the item at the following City Council meeting.

This proposed amendment, if passed, is a significant step in providing more transparency to and improving the workings of the Committees and City Council. This should result in better government for the people of Chicago.

Under this amendment, all but “routine or repetitive” items directly introduced to a Committee will need to be publicly posted at least 48 hours prior to the Committee meeting. The item will also need to be transmitted to all Council members by that same deadline with an impartial and unbiased summary of the item. In addition, attached to the item must be a statement explaining the urgency as to why the item is being directly introduced, rather than going through the normal process of being introduced at a Council meeting and then referred to a Committee.

This will mean that the public will have an opportunity to see the text of the item before the Committee meeting is held, as well as prior to the Council taking action – in contrast to what happens in many instances currently. Often the text of these direct introduction items is not posted and there is no record number listed with the vague description of the item that appears on the Committee agenda. The result is that the summary of the meeting that is presented as part of the agenda of the next City Council meeting does not contain the record number and the public again cannot look up the text of the item before the full Council acts.

Moreover, this proposed amendment will provide much needed time for the Alders to review direct introduction items. The League has learned from a number of different Alders that far too often they are receiving the text of such direct introduction items shortly before the Committee meetings. By requiring at least 48 hours' notice for all Alders, this should result in the Alders having time to consider the items more carefully, raise questions that should be asked, and then take a more informed vote. This will benefit all the people of Chicago.

The addition of the requirement that a statement explaining the urgency which necessitates the use of direct introduction should mean that the use of the direct introduction process occurs only when there truly is a need which justifies the reduced ability of the public to provide input.

Importantly, this amendment responds to the concerns raised by a number of Alders when a similar proposal was considered by this Committee in October. This revised proposal contains no changes to the process for submitting substitutes and exempts "routine and repetitive" matters from the other provisions concerning direct introduction items. **With these changes, we hope that this proposed amendment will be approved.**

We thank Alder Reilly (42nd) and Alder Waguespack (32nd) for collaborating and sponsoring this proposal.

We also thank all of you for considering the League's comments. Again, the League is urging that (1) this proposal be placed on a Rules Committee agenda this month or the next meeting, (2) that the Rules Committee approve this important step to add transparency to City Government, and (3) that the Council then pass this good government measure.

Yours truly,
Jane Ruby, President