

Vote yes to keep city ordinance

The League of Women Voters was formed in the aftermath of a long and hard-fought battle to give women the right to vote. It is hard to believe that women have had the right to vote in the United States for less than 100 years.

On Nov. 8, Traverse City will be deciding whether to continue to allow people, regardless of their sexual orientation, to hold jobs and live in homes without fear of being fired or evicted because of their sexual orientation.

It is hard to believe anyone could oppose the exercise of these fundamental rights, isn't it? This ordinance gives equal, not special, rights to all who live in or visit Traverse City.

The Traverse City Nondiscrimination Ordinance, which was unanimously passed by the Traverse City Commission in October 2010, has been in effect for a year without any unintended consequences. The ordinance delivers a strong message about who we are. It shows that Traverse City is open, welcoming and businessfriendly.

In other cities with similar ordinances, business has flourished. Their ordinances have had the effect of attracting businesses and citizens. In the State of Michigan alone, almost 20 cities, including Ann Arbor, Detroit, East Lansing, Ferndale, Grand Rapids, Huntington Woods, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Ypsilanti have nondiscrimination ordinances similar to the Traverse City ordinance.

Nationally, the League of Women Voters is committed to equal rights for all persons, regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability. The Traverse City Nondiscrimination Ordinance, which you are asked to vote "yes" to keep in November, reflects this commitment by treating all people equally.

The issue before us on Nov. 8 is simply whether to keep an ordinance that extends the right to housing, jobs and public accommodations to everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, including heterosexuals, gays and lesbians.

There are those who will tell you that it is more than that. It is not. The Nondiscrimination Ordinance has nothing to do with what individual churches do (they are excluded from compliance), with what a person renting a room in his or her home does (they are also excluded from compliance), or with what private clubs do (also excluded). The ordinance provides victims of discrimination by employers, landlords or businesses serving the public with a legal way to right these wrongs.

It is hard to believe that women were second-class citizens until a Constitutional Amendment giving women the right to vote was ratified in 1920. It is equally hard to believe that some people continue to support denial of basic human rights based on sexual orientation.

The Nondiscrimination Ordinance is about fairness, equality and human dignity, nothing more. The Grand Traverse Area League of Women Voters is asking you to vote yes to keep it.

About the author: Donna S. Hornberger, of Traverse City, is president of the League of Women Voters of the Grand Traverse Area.



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