

The Citizen

The Newsletter of The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland
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Mission

The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland seeks to achieve integrity, efficiency, and transparency in local and county government by promoting citizen education and involvement.

Executive Committee

Jim Dixon Chair
Jay Carson Vice Chair
Ed Blakemore Secretary
Jennifer Griveas
Michael Gesing
Virginia Valdes



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The Citizens League Joins Forces With The NEO Citizens League

The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland and The Northeast Ohio Citizens League have joined forces.

Michael Gesing, who formed and led the NEOCL, has joined the Executive Committee of The Citizens League. The NEOCL will be renamed The Citizens League Institute. It will share leadership with The Citizens League, operate as a 501(C)(3), and house education-based programs such as a regional goal-setting initiative. The Citizens League is organized as a membership-based 501(C)(4) so it can advocate key policy positions.

Jim Dixon, Chair of the The Citizens League's Executive Committee, said, "We recognized immediately that we had a shared mission that we should pursue together. The unification of our groups will create an organizational structure that is well suited to meet our goals."

Gesing added, "As a general matter, it is crucial for nonprofit groups with similar programs and missions to collaborate with each other. By combining forces, we will operate more efficiently and strengthen our ability to make a lasting impact on our civic culture."

The collaboration grew from one of The Citizens League's inaugural programs. In addition to recruiting general members, members of the Executive Committee, and Advisors, The Citizens League is meeting with other good government organizations in the region to develop strategic partnerships. In addition to the NEOCL, The Citizens League has met with representatives of The Civic Commons, The Cleveland Coalition, the editorial board of *Crain's Cleveland Business*, and the Citizen Reform Association of Cuyahoga County. Watch for additional announcements in 2011 as this program bears fruit.

Rebirth in 2010: The Year in Review

In April 2010, several citizens who saw a need to reform the region's civic culture concluded a year-long planning process and moved boldly into the public space. They approved bylaws, crafted a mission statement, and filed the articles of incorporation for The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland. After an absence of six years, the region's most historic venue for civic participation was back.

With a genesis in the widespread corruption investigations that implicated almost all levels of government and numerous members of the business community, The Citizens League had no shortage of problems to tackle. As an organization in a rebuilding mode, it elected to focus its resources on a program that is a hallmark for such organizations—the evaluation of candidates for office. Focusing on the newly-created office of County Executive, The Citizens League assembled a demographically diverse group of individuals to participate in its Candidates Program. They invented the Digital Dossier—a web-based form of biographical information-sharing—and published thorough non-partisan evaluations of the candidates prior to the May primary. They then interviewed the six candidates whose names appeared on the final ballot, attended frequently contentious meetings to vet the candidates, and published extensive evaluations that included an endorsement of then Lakewood Mayor Ed FitzGerald.

The Citizens League's Focus for 2011: Nurturing the New County Government

The Citizens League does not suffer from a shortage of good ideas. The challenge for its leadership has been to rebuild a venerable institution while selecting programming options that will yield the greatest impact.

Through a strategic planning process that benefited from the input of its Advisors, The Citizens League has elected to focus its efforts in 2011 and beyond on a multi-pronged approach to supporting Cuyahoga County's new government. In keeping with its mission, The Citizens League intends to provide a venue for citizens to create an efficient, transparent, honest, and responsive government at the county level.

The support will come from several sources. In addition to attending the meetings of County Council, The Citizens League is already establishing the lines of communication that will allow it to alert County leadership to issues critical to the citizenry. These include issues relating to initial appointments, organizational structure, and separation of powers between executive and council.

The Citizens League will also support each County Council District by organizing Citizen District Caucuses. The purpose of each caucus will be to provide an enduring organization of citizens with knowledge of each District's issues. Their purpose will be to provide a stable non-partisan influence on and support of each County Councilperson.

The Citizens League is also coordinating with members of the transition committees to ensure that their involvement continues, that their voices are heard, and that their contributions are valued and recognized.

With its agenda set, The Citizens League will now ask its members and prospective members for help. Initial efforts include: (1) recruiting qualified and energetic individuals to fill the remaining seats on its Executive Committee; (2) recruiting an Internet Communications Coordinator to assist with the League's web site and advise the County on its web site; (3) recruiting members to lead each of the Citizen District Caucuses and prepare a survey of regional attitudes; (4) recruiting researchers to compile a Directory of Public Officials and create a survey of public attitudes; (5) meeting with other good government groups to form strategic partnerships; and (6) recruiting volunteers to energize a planning platform and process to guide citizen involvement in governance.

Executive Committee Expands, Continues Recruiting Efforts

The Citizens League is pleased to announce that Virginia Varas de Valdes, Jennifer Griveas, and Michael Gensing have joined its Executive Committee.

Virginia worked for over 27 years in the workers compensation field, ending her career as Director of Claims Services for the fourth largest brokerage firm in the United States. She is currently seeking a Masters Degree from Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs. Virginia resides in Lakewood.

As indicated, Mike joins after leading the Northeast Ohio Citizens League. He is a long-time citizen activist who advocates for a variety of issues including regionalism and digital economy in Northeast Ohio. Michael is the owner of Smart Coast, a technology consulting firm, and resides in Bay Village with his wife and children.

Jennifer is the Director of Legal Affairs at the Eliza Jennings Senior Care Network and lives with her husband and son in Westlake. She is both a journalist and an attorney, and is serving as The Citizens League's Media Relations Coordinator.

Under the Bylaws of The Citizens League, the Executive Committee is to be comprised of up to a dozen members who are committed to the non-partisan pursuit of The Citizen League's mission. The initial leadership elected to leave several seats so they could be filled following The Citizen League's rebirth in 2010. The Citizen League strives to speak with a voice that reflects the community's diversity, in terms of age, residence, heritage, gender, and political point of view. If you are interested in giving more of your time, please contact a member of the Executive Committee.

Three Prominent Civic Leaders Will Contribute as Advisors to The Citizens League

The Citizens League is proud to announce that Janis Purdy, Eugene Kramer, and Patricia Carey have agreed to serve as Advisors to The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland.

Jan Purdy served for twelve years as the Executive Director of The Citizens League in the 1980s and 1990s. She also served on the Ohio Ethics Commission and numerous other organizations. Jan provided crucial direction to those involved in resurrecting The Citizens League in 2010. She currently works as a consultant to nonprofit organizations in Cleveland and Akron.

Gene Kramer is a lawyer in private practice in Cleveland who was a strong supporter of The Citizens League for many years. For forty years Gene has advised and represented state and local governments and agencies in a wide variety of matters. He has helped draft provisions of the Ohio Constitution, statutes, and many other types of legislation including the recently adopted Cuyahoga County Charter and charter amendments. He and his wife Joanne have already provided important guidance to the Candidates Program as it reviewed the candidates for County Executive in 2010.

Patricia Carey was a member of the Board of Trustees for The Citizens League and The Citizens League Research Institute for several years in the 1990s. She has worked in government affairs for more than twenty-five years as an advocate of sustainable land use and regional planning, most recently as the Director of the Cuyahoga Valley Regional Council of Governments.

“We could not be more excited to have the support of Pat, Gene, and Jan,” said Jay Carson. “They are valuable sources of information, and their guidance has been and will continue to be instrumental.”

The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland Individual Membership Application

The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland encourages you to join today with a contribution of any amount. We offer the following suggested membership levels.

Student	\$10	Civic Leader	\$500 or more
Under 30	\$25	Civic Principal	\$1,250 or more
Member	\$50 or more	Civic Pacesetter	\$2,500 or more
Civic Builder	\$100 or more	Civic Champion	\$10,000 or more

Membership Benefits: Membership is open to individuals of voting age who support the mission of The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland. Members may participate in the work of committees and study groups. They may cast a vote for Executive Committee members at the membership meeting. They may also hold a seat on the Executive Committee. They will also receive, if they provide an e-mail address, the periodic e-newsletter.

To join, complete the form below and mail it with your check to: The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland, P.O. Box 14702, Cleveland, Ohio, 44114.

Member Name: _____
Street Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Telephone _____
E-mail _____
Membership Amount _____
Referred By _____

The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland seeks to achieve integrity, efficiency, and transparency in local and county government by promoting citizen education and involvement. Members agree to support this mission and participate in activities in a non-partisan fashion.

We respect your privacy: It is the policy of The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland never to provide your email address or contact information to another organization.

The Citizens League of Greater Cleveland is organized as a 501(C)(4) corporation. As such, membership dues are not tax deductible.