



**The League of Women Voters® of Orange County**

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## **RESOLUTION: Nemours Children's Hospital April 2007**

**Executive Summary: We strongly urge AHCA (Agency for Health Care Administration) to approve the Certificate of Need for Nemours Foundation to build a children's hospital in Orlando.**

Whereas: The Nemours Foundation wishes to build an 82 bed children's hospital in Orlando with a five bed Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and an eight bed Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, **and Nemours can and will pay the cost of construction**, and all children seen receive one high standard of care regardless of their financial status. **Eligible families pay for services according to their capability, based on family income and special adverse circumstances.** The Nemours Foundation operates a special national program to fund the difference; and,

Whereas: Our national infant death rate is the highest of all industrial countries, and **Florida's infant death rate is among the highest in the nation and** Orange County Health Department is already wrestling with overcrowding of clinics by immigrant and uninsured women and children, and may be forced to close these clinics to pregnant women, causing even more babies to be born without prenatal care. In 2005 Florida had over 1,600 infant deaths and over 19,800 low birth weight babies. **Orange County Health Department says, "Sufficient sustainability is doubtful with current resources and future predictions."**; and,

Whereas: **The number of children admitted to a hospital in Central Florida grew by 37% in the past five years, from 11,684 admissions to 16,029; however the number of pediatric hospital beds shrank by 24% during that time, from 328 beds to 249 beds.** Costs to local hospitals for a full capacity neonatal intensive care unit are ten times greater than care for healthy babies born without complications; and,

Whereas: **Our utilization of children's hospital beds is already over the percent which identifies need: Utilization of pediatric beds in 2005 was 99.25%, and NICU beds at 100.26%, well over the 80% utilization which identifies need.** Although acute care beds can be diverted to pediatric care, the availability of acute care beds will diminish as population increases and utilization of acute care beds is already near the 75% level which identifies need; and,

Whereas: Experts including the Central Florida eight-county visioning organization, MyRegion.Org predicts our **population will double by 2050**, reaching over seven million persons in Central Florida, it is logical now to plan for more pediatric hospital beds. **Nemours offers additional beds and also specialty services for critically ill children**. While the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) does not consider population increase projections in the decision making due to "rapidly changing health care environment", the League believes the sustained growth predicted to continue, **requires us to plan now for advance needs**; and,

Whereas: **The availability of doctors in Central Florida is affected by lack of internship opportunities in local hospitals to such an extent that Florida ranks 46th in the nation in the number of residencies for its population but fourth in retaining physicians after their residencies**. Availability of residencies in an additional hospital would increase the overall number of doctors in this area, and also create a magnet for doctors to come here from other states; and,

Whereas: While we understand that a new hospital might reduce the number of new patients and new doctors available to existing hospitals in the short term, Nemours' experience in another states with similar circumstances **has been that the specialty services of Nemours draws patients from other counties and other states to the extent that more patients and more doctors come to the existing hospitals as well as to Nemours**; and

Whereas: **Children in the Orlando area have been transferred to Gainesville, Tampa and Miami for treatment of certain life threatening conditions, including organ and stem cell transplants** for which service has not been available. Added transportation time can threaten the life of the patient. Nemours can begin to offer these specialty services locally, eliminating trips to other parts of the State or Nation; **and Nemours is the only health care service provider in Central Florida with sub-specialty pediatric services as its sole focus**; and,

Whereas: Recently, Orange County committed \$300 million in tax breaks to The Burnham Institute for a commitment of 300 jobs (working out to \$1 million per job), this investment by Nemours includes a \$250-300 million capital investment, \$30-40 million annual mission investment and significant numbers of potential jobs with an economic impact of over \$350 million in Central Florida within the first five years. There will be no fundraising, no tax dollars, and no community contributions solicited to build this hospital. Nemours Children's Hospital will support the development of the region as a worldwide destination for health care providing **highly accessible services that will complement the UCF College of Medicine and the Medical Corridor**; and,

Whereas: The League of Women Voters carefully studies an issue before making a statement, and in 1991 adopted a study of the public and private mechanisms for delivery and financing of health care in Florida. In 1993 the League adopted the position "**to promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all US residents and controls health care costs**." ; and,

**Therefore: We urge AHCA to approve the Certificate of Need for Nemours Foundation to build a children's hospital in Orlando.** Nemours has an outstanding national medical reputation, and prodigious financial resources. The location that they have identified will be a close fit with the proposed University of Central Florida Medical School, providing excellent residency opportunities for medical students, and help expand the "medical corridor" that is being encouraged for Central Florida. We believe the entrance of Nemours into this market will improve health care quality for children overall, and expand our ability to meet the needs of a growing population with higher than average health needs.

**We urge you to help Central Florida families seize this opportunity for improving pediatric health care and expanding access to top quality pediatric healthcare for ALL our children.**

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all members of the League of Women Voters of Orange County,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deirdre Macnab". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Deirdre Macnab  
President, League of Women Voters of Orange County

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