



## The League of Women Voters of Delaware Supports Continued Adequate Funding for DIMER

The members of the League of Women Voters were very pleased to see that funds for the DIMER program were included in former Governor Markell's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2018. DIMER is the shortened name for the Delaware Institute of Medical Education and Research which was created in 1969. We urge the legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC), and all members of the General Assembly, to support this funding.

Many Delawareans know that Delaware does not have a medical school and realize we are not really big enough to support one. However, fewer know that for nearly 50 years Delaware, via DIMER, has appropriated money in our budgets to reserve 20 slots per year at Sidney Kimmel Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University for applicants from Delaware. The DIMER program now includes a similar arrangement with Pennsylvania College of Osteopathic Medicine for 5 slots. Since these schools receive thousands of applications per year, this is no small thing and increases the odds of acceptance for Delaware residents. The applicants, of course, must meet the academic requirements.

Probably even fewer people are aware of the far-reaching effects these connections have on the medical "infrastructure" in our state. Christiana Care Health System, Nemours A.I. Hospital for Children and the Wilmington Veterans Administration Hospital have teaching relationships with the Sidney Kimmel Medical College and local physicians serve as part time faculty. Students from these schools take part of their training at our hospitals. The many robust residency programs at Delaware hospitals are also part of this inter-connectedness. A post medical school residency is now an expected part of medical education so these programs are a major piece of introducing these new physicians to Delaware.

So what does this have to do with those who have no personal interest in someone they know becoming a physician? It matters, or should matter, greatly to anyone who uses or will need medical services in this state! The fact is that physicians tend to go into practice near where they have trained. These connections are Delaware's pipeline for acquiring the providers of the future. This is especially important now that our population, as well as our physicians, is aging. We CANNOT expect other states to provide them for us just because we don't have our own medical school. Continuing strong support for the DIMER program is in our own best interest, both as individuals and as a state which must prepare for the future.

In addition to ensuring slots for future physicians, DIMER funds in recent years also have been used to partially re-pay student loans for physicians and dentists who are willing to serve in Delaware's underserved areas. These funds frequently can be matched by federal funds. They are an incentive for practitioners to locate in places where their personal financial obligations might not otherwise allow them to practice. Again, this is a win for us.

We understand that Delaware has a budget crunch but we believe that showing support for a thriving health care environment—for everyday care, plus teaching and research-- is an incentive for retaining jobs and bringing new businesses to Delaware. To repeat, we urge support for this program.