

To: San Diego City Council
From: League of Women Voters of San Diego
Date: Feb. 5, 2007
Re: Item-200 Amendments to Appropriations Ordinance, Repeal of BPR Ordinance, Resolutions to Clarify Budget Process Requirements

A few short years ago, the LWV chaired the city transition committee to work out the details of the new mayor-council form of government. We vigorously supported the creation of an independent budget analyst office to ensure that the city council would never again be totally dependent for its decision-making on a city manager's budget figures, interpretations, and recommendations. You wisely created the tool that could place the legislative branch of city government on equal footing with the executive branch, as spelled out in Proposition F.

Why was this so important for the LWV? We've said this to you many times:

The people of this city depend on YOU, our city councilmembers, to hear and respond -- in open public meetings -- to our needs and concerns over the health, safety, and general welfare of our communities and city. The Mayor does not have the same responsibility or obligation to listen or answer directly to the public. What this means is that if your legally constituted powers are eroded, your ability to respond to your constituents is curtailed and the voice of the public gets silenced. This continues to be an overriding concern for the League.

We don't want to move backwards and repeat the follies of past years when top management, behind their closed doors, played shell games with public money. With the help of the IBA, the council is in a better position than ever to provide meaningful checks, balances, and oversight to top management. This is what leads to true efficiency and accountability in this city, from you as well as from the Mayor's office.

For the League, today's debate is very much about protecting the role of the public in local government.