

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
From: League of Women Voters of San Diego
Date: April 4, 2005
Re: Item – 53 Non-Agenda Public Comment

Four years ago we came before you to express our deep concern about a proposal to change the permanent rules of council to transfer non-agenda public comment to the end of the council session.

Our message remains simple: public participation in the political process may be cumbersome, but it is a crucial component of a healthy democracy. Facilitating, not discouraging, non-agenda public comment is essential.

You may not always like what you hear from every individual who approaches this microphone, but that doesn't justify any attempt to discourage public comment. Postponing public comment until the tail end of meetings not only discourages us citizens who wish to be heard, but also deprives you, our elected officials, of first-hand, on-the-ground perspectives, concerns, and potentially valuable recommendations.

Please keep in mind that council members will soon take on a new role as an independent legislative body. We strongly hope you will use the opportunity, when you rewrite the permanent rules of council, to establish procedures that will serve the public better than ever.

Therefore, we urge you to deny today's proposal to stifle public comment. As your constituents, we are counting on you to create better and more democratic alternatives for improving the flow, timing, and accountability of future council meetings.