

## **WHY THE SAN DIEGO LWV OPPOSES PROP D**



### **WHAT IS PROP D?**

Prop D "Revises the City Charter Relating to the Strong Mayor Form of Governance" (*to see the full text of Prop D as it appears on the ballot, click [here](#)*).

Prop D consists of three distinct questions bundled in an all-or-nothing package. Voters are not permitted to pick and choose but must support or reject the entire proposal.

The three questions are: 1) Shall the Charter be revised to make permanent the Strong Mayor form of governance? 2) Shall the Charter be revised to add a ninth Council seat? and 3) Shall the Charter be revised to increase the Council votes required to override a mayoral veto to a two-thirds vote?"

### **WHO ARE THE FINANCIAL BACKERS OF THE STRONG MAYOR/YES ON PROP D CAMPAIGN?**

Do you want to know who stands to gain most from a Strong Mayor system? *For an eye-opening glimpse into the world of special-interest contributors to Prop D, click [HERE](#)*

### **WHY DOES THE SAN DIEGO LWV OPPOSE PROP D?**

1) We oppose making Strong Mayor permanent based on a demonstrated record of poor performance during the Strong Mayor trial period. *For a revealing account of the underside of the Strong Mayor system over the past 5 years, click [HERE](#)*. The LWV has concluded, based on close observation of the Strong Mayor form of government, that political accountability, responsiveness to citizen concerns, efficient management of the city, checks and balances, access, and openness have deteriorated during the 5-year trial period.

2) We oppose creating a 9th council district at this time. The LWV has concluded that *the substantial increase in costs to taxpayers of approximately \$1 Million per year for adding a 9th council district cannot be justified* at a time of massive cuts in city services and no executive plan to fix San Diego's crippling structural budget deficit.

3) We oppose any measure to diminish the voice of voters and communities. Prop D's 2/3 super-majority requirement for the council to override the mayor's veto will further *weaken the city council's ability to respond to neighborhood needs and concerns* and will be detrimental to the public interest. *Click [HERE](#)* for more details.

### **THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF CITY GOVERNMENT IS TO EFFECTIVELY OPERATE THE CITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL ITS CITIZENS**

The LWV believes that there is NO SINGLE BEST SYSTEM to effectively operate a city. We also believe that there is NO INHERENT SUPERIORITY of a Council-Manager system over a Strong Mayor system, or vice-versa.

But take note -- while all forms of city government are susceptible to political corruption, the

good track records of council-manager cities such as Phoenix, Dallas, Austin, San Jose, and San Antonio are more consistent than those of highly politicized "strong mayor" cities like, for example, Chicago, Oakland, Philadelphia, Detroit, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and New York.

As a point of historical interest, San Diego adopted a Council-Manager system in 1931. The goal was to reform San Diego governance and minimize the influence of political machines, cronyism, patronage, and widespread corruption from concentrated power dominating Strong Mayor cities.

We believe that joining the Strong Mayor club is a bad choice for the future of our city. *Click [here](#)* for more background information

## **HOW YOUR NO VOTE ON PROP D BRINGS POSITIVE RESULTS AND PUBLIC BENEFITS**

- Your NO vote installs a modernized City Council-City Manager governing system
- Your NO vote preserves public protections of recent reforms like an Independent Budget Analyst and City Auditor
- Your NO vote gives us a community-friendly system in which the mayor is required to vote in public, city operations are managed by a qualified professional manager, and citizens have direct communication with the mayor at all public council meetings
- Your NO vote restores the mayor as leader of the city council, answerable directly to the public in regular public hearings
- Your NO vote brings immediate accountability because the city manager answers on a daily basis to the public through the mayor and councilmembers. It makes sure that all elected officials work together on public business in front of the public
- Your NO vote reverses the growing imbalance of powers between the executive Strong Mayor and an increasingly weakened city council, thwarted from acting on community concerns
- Your NO vote reverses the growing sense of helplessness among neighborhood residents, local businesses, and community planning groups trying to improve their communities but feeling shut out under Strong Mayor

## **A CAUTIONARY TALE**

A decade ago, the actions of a powerful San Diego mayor, working with the city's highest-ranking non-elected official, the city manager, put into motion a series of events that brought San Diego to its financial knees.

These two top officials, working together behind closed doors, put the mayor's political ambitions ahead of the public good. After pouring public funds into downtown legacy projects (Convention Center expansion, downtown baseball stadium, Republican national convention) they maneuvered to balance the city budget mainly by underfunding the municipal pension system while increasing pension benefits. This set-up led to a disastrous budgetary and ethical crisis. Although it took place under a council-manager system it was a deviation from the norm, not the rule.

**Ironically, under Prop D the likelihood of the same kind of top-level, behind-the-scenes maneuvering would not be a deviation from the norm -- it would be the rule.** Prop D would establish a system of governance in which the Strong Mayor routinely works behind closed doors with the highest-ranking non-elected city official, the city manager (now called chief operating officer or COO), a political appointee answerable only to the mayor.

In other words, it appears that Prop D would permanently install the same conditions that created the crisis we are in today.

**A STRONG MAYOR SYSTEM WOULD PUSH OUR CITY OUT OF THE FRYING PAN AND INTO THE FIRE. THAT'S WHY THE LWV URGES YOU TO VOTE NO ON PROP D**