

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Christine Harris

**Date Submitted:** 05/19/2024 11:09 AM

**Council File No:** 23-1027

**Comments for Public Posting:** As part of developing the scope for the LA Charter Reform Process, the Ad Hoc Committee should direct the Charter Reform Commission to explicitly study electing the City Council from multi-seat districts elected by proportional representation (called proportional ranked choice voting, or PRCV), as part of its consideration of Council enlargement. Broader and more proportional representation from within each multi-seat district is necessary to shift the current situation that has resulted in the repeated incidences of corruption. Further, PRCV would mean far better realization of the goals of the federal and California Voting Rights Acts. It would also address the serious issues our city faces regarding the redistricting process because it would substantially lower the stakes of drawing district lines. This is because, with PRCV, elections and issues of representation would no longer be winner-take-all. Lastly, By moving to a single PRCV general election and eliminating Los Angeles' two-round, contingent run-off system, it would place the choice of who represents Los Angeles before the greatest and most diverse number of voters, compared to lower-turnout and less diverse primaries.

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Mona Field  
**Date Submitted:** 05/21/2024 01:39 PM  
**Council File No:** 23-1027  
**Comments for Public Posting:** See attached



May 19, 2024

Ethics Charter Reforms - Council File 23-1027

Dear Councilmembers:

We commend you for considering the much awaited Ethics Commission reforms. However, if the goal was to strengthen the Commission, the current Charter amendment proposal does not meet that intention. The purpose of the Ethics Commission is “to help preserve the public trust and foster public confidence in city government and elections.” In order to realize its mission, the Commission requires more independence from the elected officials it is meant to oversee. The current proposal preserves the status quo and, in some cases, reaffirms the Commission’s dependence on the City Council.

The proposed minimum protected budget for the Ethics Commission is only \$6.5M, which is insufficient for it to do the work it has been asked to do. The Commission will require at least \$7.6M in order to allow for increased staffing. Additionally, the Commission’s budget must be tied to inflation, which will provide a stronger relationship to cost of living increases and labor agreement changes that come over time.

The current language in Charter Sections 702(k) and 911 permits the Commission to retain outside counsel only in the case of “exigent circumstances,” but provides no definition. A finding of “exigent circumstances” should only be permitted if the city has declared a fiscal emergency. In order to maintain its independence, the Commission must be able to retain outside counsel of its choice without interference.

The issue of non-action by City Council regarding recommendations made by the Ethics Commission has incapacitated the Commission’s ability to move forward. The current language requires the City Council only to set a deadline for a hearing. This is clearly insufficient. A deadline must be set for City Council **action**. If the Council does not act, the Ethics Commission must have the authority to put the recommendation to the voters.

Regarding the appointment of commissioners: 1) If a vacancy has not been filled within the designated time, the Commission must have the power to fill the vacancy via open application. In the recent past, vacancies have caused cancellations of Ethics Committee meetings due to lack of a quorum; 2) The ability of appointing authorities to remove commissioners leaves them vulnerable to undue pressure from those who appointed them.

We strongly request the City Council act to bring about the stated goal of strengthening the Ethics Commission.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our suggestions.

Mona Field, President  
League of Women Voters of Greater Los Angeles