

April 29, 2026

Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Relations Committee
200 N. Spring Street, Room 350
Los Angeles, CA, 90012



Re: Agenda Item #1 – Charter Reform Commission Report

Honorable Chair and Members of the Rules Committee and City Council:

On behalf of California Common Cause, I urge you to approach the Charter Reform Commission's report as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild trust in City Hall and fundamentally strengthen Los Angeles' system of governance.

First, the City must **engage the public thoroughly and meaningfully** before dismissing, advancing, or amending the L.A. City Charter Reform Commission's recommendations. The Commission's report reflects extensive outreach—over 50 public meetings, thousands of comments, and engagement across all 15 council districts . That level of engagement should not end with the Commission. As you consider which reforms to advance, it is critical that Angelenos continue to have clear, accessible, and meaningful opportunities to shape the final package. This includes robust public hearings, language access, and sufficient time for communities to understand and weigh in on proposed changes that will govern the City for decades.

Second, the Council should **adopt reforms that meaningfully address corruption, restore trust, and improve representation**. The Commission's findings are clear: the City's challenges are structural. Concentrated power, opaque decision-making, and weak oversight have enabled pay-to-play dynamics and repeated scandals that have eroded public confidence in City Hall. Incremental changes will not be enough. The City must adopt reforms that make power easier to follow, harder to abuse, and more accountable to the public.

Third, we strongly encourage the Council to advance key reforms within the government structure and ethics and accountability portions of the report—particularly those that **increase council size and strengthen ethics, accountability, and campaign finance safeguards**.

Expanding the City Council is one of the most important reforms in this package. Los Angeles currently has some of the largest council districts in the nation, with each member representing roughly 260,000 residents. This scale limits access, weakens representation, and concentrates power in ways that can make misconduct harder to detect and prevent. Establishing more districts will bring government closer to the people, improve constituent services, and create more opportunities for diverse and responsive representation. The proposed transition framework appropriately phases in this expansion beginning in 2032 .

Equally critical are reforms to **strengthen the City's ethics, accountability, and campaign finance systems**. The report rightly identifies that trust cannot be rebuilt without strong, independent oversight and clear consequences for misconduct. Authorizing Ethics Commission

ballot placement, providing independent legal counsel, and securing a protected budget are essential steps to ensure the Commission has the tools and independence needed to investigate and enforce the law.

In addition, the proposed **accountability and campaign finance reforms**—including clarifying suspension rules, prohibiting the use of campaign funds to pay certain fines, aligning penalty structures, and strengthening enforcement authority—are necessary to ensure that violations carry real consequences. These reforms move beyond symbolism and address a core public concern: that rules exist, but are not consistently enforced. Strengthening these provisions will help deter misconduct, reduce opportunities for pay-to-play, and ensure that officials are held accountable when they violate the public's trust.

These recommendations are also consistent with long-standing proposals from California Common Cause to enhance Ethics Commission independence, ensure timely action on reforms, and close loopholes in campaign finance and lobbying laws. Without strong ethics enforcement and modernized campaign finance rules, structural reforms alone will not be sufficient to restore public confidence.

Taken together, these reforms directly respond to what Angelenos have been asking for: **more voice, stronger accountability, and a government that works for residents—not insiders**. They address the root causes of corruption and mistrust by changing the underlying rules of the system.

This moment calls for leadership. We urge the Committee and Council to:

- Continue robust and inclusive public engagement,
- Advance a comprehensive package of meaningful structural reforms, and
- Prioritize reforms that expand representation and strengthen ethics and accountability.

Los Angeles voters deserve the opportunity to decide on a reform package that is bold enough to meet this moment. We respectfully urge you to move these and other important reforms forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

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