

Wachs to Quit as Council President Pro Tem
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LOS ANGELES (CNS) - In a symbolic move, Joel Wachs said today he is quitting as president pro tem of the City Council, to protest the efforts of his colleagues to ``thwart" passage of a new city charter.

Wachs said most of the council is opposed to proposed charter revision. He called it a ``shameful and self-serving attempt to thwart any kind of meaningful charter reform."

The council votes for new officers in a month.

Wachs said the council majority is against enlarging the body and creating neighborhood councils and increasing accountability, because it would undo the ``status quo of backroom deals at City Hall."

The opposition, led by Councilman Rudy Svorinich Jr., has attacked the source of the \$1.3 million raised by the pro-charter campaign, which was largely organized by Mayor Richard Riordan, as coming mostly from out-of-state donors.

Wachs said the main issue involves the neighborhood councils proposed in the new charter, which would, ``for the very first time, give the people in every neighborhood in our city a real say in what happens at City Hall. And that's what the council does not want.

``There's a fear around here," Wachs said. ``A small group of people has an amazing amount of power.

``I've been appalled at the thinly veiled threats which council members made to practically blackmail the powerful city employee unions into opposing Proposition 1."

The 28-year council veteran is among three people on the 14-member council supporting the revised city constitution that voters will be asked to approve Tuesday.

Some members have contributed more than half the \$150,000 raised by the anti-charter campaign, including President John Ferraro, who chipped in \$50,000 from his officeholder account.

Mailers financed in part by those contributions contain ``bald-faced lies," Wachs said, such as the statement that the Fire Department would be unable to do its job if the charter passes.

Ferraro, the longest serving member of the council, said Wachs' resignation amounts to political grandstanding.

``I'm glad the election is only five days away, and I have faith the voters will see their way through all this rhetoric and have the good sense to vote no on Tuesday."