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OUR OPINION

Decision time

IT'S D-Day for charter reform—the time for the people we elected to reshape our broken city government to make critical decisions on the future of Los Angeles.

The issues on the table for a vote at today's meeting of the elected Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission include neighborhood empowerment and how to divide neighborhoods into City Council districts.

Nothing is more important than for the commissioners to come together around a plan that will encourage ordinary citizens to get involved in city government, to feel they can affect how the city runs and help determine what kind of place Los Angeles becomes in the future.

How many council districts should there be: the 15 there are today, with each council member representing a quarter-million people? 19? 21? More?

Should members of the neighborhood councils be elected, and if so, district-wide or by precincts?

Should they have real power? Over zoning? Over a portion of the city budget to improve their neighborhoods?

These are among the questions that the commissioners, after many months

**Charter panel
faces critical
vote on
neighborhood
empowerment**

of study and debate, must finally decide.

A diverse group with very different views on many aspects of reform, the commissioners are the ones we empowered to make these decisions.

We urge them to be bold, to set aside the wailings of those who already have a measure of power and influence at City Hall and look to the needs of the millions of residents of Los Angeles who feel powerless and alienated, who feel there's nothing they can do to fight City Hall.

There are many things broken in the structure of city government as it is created by the charter. But the fundamental malaise of the city is the apathy and disengagement of the public, whose values and interests are too often ignored by narrow interests that control the city's political life.

The reform commission has the historic opportunity to begin the healing.

We are not looking for a miracle cure; it is beyond our wildest dreams and prayers.

By putting real power on the table and sharing it with communities of this vast and diverse city, the commission will have started the process of bringing Los Angeles together and giving it hope of survival in the 21st century.