

## DAILY NEWS

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### OUR OPINION

# The clock's ticking

**L**A.'S first City Charter Convention was a big, boring bomb.

It seems that almost as many people gathered in protest outside the West Hall of the Los Angeles Convention Center as gathered inside to support the charter panel and its bogus reform package.

Gee, wonder why?

Could it be that few want to fight about the future of Los Angeles when they know it's already been decided by the boys in the back room, smoking their big cigars and high-fiving themselves on keeping the rest of the city's 3.5 million residents at bay?

The inside power brokers are feeling pretty secure.

As Councilman Nate Holden reasoned, only 250 of the city's 3.5 million residents showed up because everyone else in L.A. is "satisfied with the way government is working."

So satisfied that 200,000 residents have signed Valley VOTE's petition to study secession in the Valley.

So satisfied new groups are sprouting in Eagle Rock, San Pedro and elsewhere in Los Angeles to copy what Valley VOTE is doing.

The battle lines over the future of Los Angeles have been drawn whether the charter commissions deal with it or not.

The skirmish over whether to shift power between the mayor and the council is a fool's play, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The real debate that will rock L.A. and shift power in a cataclysmic way will center on genuine and real neighborhood empowerment vs. the status quo.

The key to shutting down the secession movement is giving neighborhood councils real decision-making power. The key to keeping Los Angeles together is for the insiders to realize they better stop barricading the doors and start listening to what people really want.

For the leadership of the San Fernando Valley and other neighborhoods in Los Angeles, staging a boycott against the convention was a historic event. They

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are lighting a  
fuse that will  
explode in their  
faces if they  
ignore demands  
for  
neighborhood  
empowerment**

threw down the gauntlet to make it clear that the proposal for neighborhood councils with only advisory power on land-use issues was the "death of charter reform."

These are not madcap revolutionaries trying to undermine the good order. These are ordinary people — homeowners, businessmen and businesswomen, working people, professionals — with a deep stake in the community, who are demanding a seat at the table of power so as to

make things better, not to change the whole order of society.

No one should doubt the resolve of this silent majority of Los Angeles voters that is tired of having its interests and values ignored.

The Daily News has looked at and reported on numerous city advisory councils and, with rare exceptions, their fate is the same: If they are out of step with the cadre of people with political power in this city, they are consistently ignored or bypassed.

People are tired of hollow advisory councils — like the 11-square-mile redevelopment project in the Northeast Valley that is going forward with virtually no participation from local residents or even city planners.

It's that kind of thing that discredits the charter commissions' proposal for advisory councils. Quite simply, such councils would do nothing to reduce voter resentment and alienation.

Los Angeles is in a downward spiral: more alienation, more bad government, more contempt for the vital interests of the public.

The city is on a course that assures a voter backlash with dangerous and unpredictable consequences.

It's not too late.

There's still time for the charter reform commissions to wake up and realize that their most important mission may be to protect the powerful interests that are pushing their buttons from themselves before the city is torn apart.

But are they listening? Will they ever?

# EDITORIALS