

Two panels to seek common ground

Committee will seek compromise plan for Los Angeles charter reform

By Rick Orlov
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A conference committee of the two charter reform committees today will consider several compromise recommendations in an effort to produce a single package of proposals for voters to consider next year.

The issues include whether to expand the City Council by six members, establish advisory neighborhood councils and create three regional planning boards.

George Kieffer and Erwin Chemerinsky, chairmen of the appointed and elected panels, respectively, are suggesting that the issues of expanding the council and reforming the City Charter be submitted separately to voters.

The elected Charter Reform

Commission had wanted a separate measure on the ballot proposing the creation of 25 council districts. The appointed Charter Reform Commission wanted it included in any charter recommendation put before voters.

Also, the committee will consider a proposal to combine recommendations from the two panels on neighborhood councils. Under one proposal, voters would be asked whether to endorse the creation of a series of neighborhood councils that would be made up of elected community members, with advisory powers on city actions. These councils would be overseen by an Office of Neighborhood Empowerment.

To staunch criticism that such an approach would yield little real power in neighborhoods, the committee is considering the creation of three area

planning commissions "as a key way to address the concern that downtown city government is too far away and too removed."

These five-member panels, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the City Council, would have jurisdiction over zoning and land use within their areas. Under the plan, the Board of Zoning Appeals would be abolished, with the area commissions taking over that job. Appeals could be made directly to the City Council.

In addition, a nine-member Planning Commission would be created to focus on planning issues for the city.

Also, Kieffer and Chemerinsky urged the committee not to change any of the present City Charter regulations involving the Los Angeles Unified School District and the city's selection requirements.

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