

1-4-99

The Elected Panel Should Aim to Win, Not Tie

Bring accountability to City Hall. Reform won't come from compromise with bureaucrats.

By LEE KANON ALPERT

Imagine there's less than a minute to play in the fourth quarter, and your team has the ball on the one-yard line, poised to score. Plus, it's only first down. A touchdown will bring home a championship; a field goal will tie the game. In a bizarre twist, your team huddles with the opponent and then emerges only to fall into field goal formation. You see, after discussing the options with the other team, they've become convinced that it's better to go for a tie rather than risk the chance of defeat.

How could they do that? Soon you might have to ask the same question of the Elected Charter Reform Commission. The elected commission is on the brink of bringing true reform to City Hall. After a year and a half of deliberations and public input, the elected commission has crafted a city constitution that proposes a new paradigm for city governance.

New to Los Angeles, that is, but familiar to good government, as it boasts co-equal executive and legislative branches and restores accountability to City Hall. The proposed charter brings our city more in line with almost every other successful major city in America and gives Los Angeles the framework it needs to compete as a world class city in the next millennium.

But there are always people who oppose change, and in this case, it's a small cadre of City Hall bureaucrats and certain City Council members who benefit measurably from the status

quo. The "opposing team" is so horrified by the prospect of losing raw power to accountability—and even more terrified of the elected commission's impending victory—that they are scrambling desperately for a compromise. In this case, the compromise charter fails to deliver a more accountable, efficient and responsive city government that spawned charter reform in the first place.

The elected commission, the people's commission, stands to win the support of Mayor Richard Riordan, other leading elected officials, civic and business organizations and important segments of labor, not to mention the voters. The elected commission is poised for victory, but must call the winning play: Reject the compromise charter and give Angelenos the real reform package they deserve.

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