

# Charter reform rift widens

## Charter battle heating up in final stretch

By Rick Orlov  
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The campaign on City Charter reform intensified Thursday with Councilman Joel Wachs resigning the second-highest council post in an angry attack on his colleagues, a flurry of last-minute contributions and new commercials targeting San Fernando Valley and inner-city voters.

New campaign reports released Thursday showed large contributions on both sides. Lobbyists, public employees and council members themselves — using funds from their officeholder accounts — backed the opposition campaign while business interests funded the pro-reform campaign.

In announcing he was stepping down as president pro tem of the council, Wachs denounced the council majority's decision to oppose charter reform after having created their own appointed commission, negotiated the proposal and endorsed putting it on the ballot.

"I can no longer serve in a post where I have no respect for a majority of my colleagues," the East Valley councilman said.

"All this is about their fear of losing power. They don't want to give up one iota of what they can do. Well, I'll tell you this, no matter what happens with charter reform I am going to be out there exposing all

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their secrets. Because once the public learns what they are doing, a stop will be put to it."

The new campaign reports showed the extent of the council members' contribution to the anti-reform campaign, with much of the money coming from donations to their officeholder accounts, which have few limits on spending.

Opponents reported raising \$117,000, with contributions from Councilman John Ferraro, \$50,000; the Los Angeles Police Protective League, \$10,000; attorney and lobbyist Neil Papiano, \$10,000; Official Police Garage Association, \$9,000; Councilman Mike Hernandez, \$5,000; Councilman Hal Bernson, \$5,000; IBEW Local 18, \$5,000; and Councilwoman Rita Walters, \$5,000.

Supporters raised an additional \$135,000, led by contributions from the Los Angeles Business Advisors, \$50,000; Bank of America, \$40,000; Peter Mullin of the Mullin Consulting Group, \$20,000; and American Golf Corp., \$5,000.

Opponents criticized the source of the supporters' money.

Councilman Rudy Svorinich Jr. said 53 percent of the \$1.3 million raised by the Yes on I committee came from sources outside the city of Los Angeles.

"This is a blatant attempt by outsiders to buy a new city government in Los Angeles," Svorinich said. "What is even more galling is that Charter Measure I proponents embrace this behavior under the banner of reform."

The strong stand taken by Wachs contrasted with the low-key approach taken by the other two council members who support reform.

Council members Mike Feuer and Cindy Miscikowski said they have been speaking to homeowner groups and civic organizations both in their districts and around the city.

"In the past week, I've been to a half-dozen things where I speak about the charter," Feuer said. "All the response I get is positive."

Miscikowski said she has had the same experience and finds people curious about the proposal.

"I get lots of questions whether it is a large group or small," Miscikowski said. "People want to know how it will affect them."

Wachs was studying a mailing the campaign wants to send out that is critical of the City Council, but had not made a decision on whether to approve it.

Feuer said he would not sign such a mailing, adding he did not want to be involved with any negative

campaign tactics. Miscikowski said she had not been approached about signing the letter.

Wachs also criticized the campaign being waged against the measure.

"They have a piece saying public safety will be threatened, that we won't be able to fight fires," Wachs said. "What are we going to do — take away their hoses? I don't think so. It's completely misleading."

Steve Afriat, who is coordinating the campaign against the measure, said the mailing was referring to provisions affecting fire service in the Harbor area that could allow it to be contracted out.

"We feel this will adversely affect fire service in the city," Afriat said. "The firefighters are also concerned that the chief would not have the independence to run the department."

Earlier in the day in Studio City, Mayor Richard Riordan urged some three dozen Valley leaders to continue their efforts through Tuesday, election day.

Standing in the center of a huddle, Riordan said the charter was needed to shake up City Hall.

"What we have there now is what I like to call legal corruption," Riordan said. "It's nothing criminal. But when you want to build an addition to your house and you're told to hire an expediter at \$5,000 or \$10,000, that's legal corruption to me."

"What we have now is nothing more than a field day for lobbyists and special interests."

Riordan also made appearances at a tree-planting ceremony in Canoga Park and a library groundbreaking in Studio City.

Rabbi Steven Jacobs, who was involved in the mission to Yugoslavia to free three American soldiers, said the charter reforms are needed to help the Valley.

"This is a piece of legislation that takes the San Fernando Valley out of being considered as a second-class citizen," Jacobs said. "This levels the playing field."

The Yes on Measure 1 campaign also began a series of cable television commercials targeted at Valley voters.

The commercials emphasize the lack of services to the Valley from the City Council and give voters an opportunity to send a message to City Hall.

Also, radio commercials are being run in South Los Angeles that say the current charter doesn't reflect the changes that have come in the city over the past 75 years.

In addition, campaign officials said more than 200,000 homes have been targeted for mailings over the next five days.