

Sacramento Charter Review Issues
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Sacramento should not allow itself to be pushed into making rushed, unwise City Charter changes in response to interests who have qualified the Initiative that is now scheduled to appear on the June 2010 Ballot. Warranting consideration are observations of informed Sacramento officials and other civic leaders and residents who think that a reasonable option may be to identify defects of the proposed Charter Initiative and, for clarity, recommend no changes in 2010. Thoughtful community consideration might then be given, possibly for submission in 2012, to alterations of parts of the Charter.

Even so, the Charter Review Committee (CRC) is especially required to focus now on the central issue that led the City Council to create this Committee: a radical proposal to change Sacramento's council/mayor/professional management form of government to an executive-mayor political structure. Given that basic issue and the subsequently shortened deadline for CRC recommendations to the Council, some crucial points warrant prompt consideration.

First, it needs to be understood that both a politically empowered mayoral structure and an executive-mayor form of government, even when under a professionally crafted charter, are powerful prescriptions for a ***weak and often-divided city council*** and ***severely narrowed civic leadership***. Under either of these charter structures, Sacramento's neighborhoods, valued community diversity, and varied cultural institutions and practices would lose influence as informed support for them by council members would be vastly diminished. Opportunities to encourage widely differing civic participation of residents and to recognize their individual and organizational accomplishments would be reduced, along with ***vital City Council leadership*** on behalf of all constructive Sacramento interests. Power would shift from a variable-sum framework designed to multiply constructive community values toward a system of personalized political-power aggrandizement.

Second, it would be unwise to diminish the professional standing of Sacramento's City Manager by having her/him selected and employed as a mayoral appointee, even with qualified majority Council consent. One must not be naive about the roles of self-serving interests in appointments made by mayors and other singularly empowered political officials. During early years of growing popularity of structures of political executive power, both Presidents Truman and Johnson lamented that they experienced relentless pressures in making appointments. Special interests and political patrons sought control of selections and officials' loyalties in office, and subsequent Presidents and other elected executives have endured ever-mounting pressures ever since. In short, the Political-Executive Spoils Culture has vastly expanded nationwide since the late 1960s. It is a political reality at the local level of American government. It prevails among charter-empowered mayors.

This City's manager should be selected and should serve as a professional with broad authority of the Council, including the Mayor, not as a mayoral *appointee at convenience of a faction*, subject to narrow interests of a charter-empowered mayor. As has been observed, *a narrow few interests*, working with no broad community inputs, created the Charter proposal now forcing a choice by voters next June. Similarly obscure interests may influence selection and retention of a manager if that position becomes an appointment of a mayor.

The irony is that neither separation of city council and mayoral powers nor distinctive mayoral selection and removal control are in the interests of a mayor with aspirations for broadly recognized strong leadership via civic integrity and noteworthy accomplishments. A mayor with command-and-control powers becomes subject to self-serving interests and a political culture of unilateral power and entitlement, while ***council members are downgraded to subordinate roles***. Sacramento will be wise not to subject present and future mayors, council members, managers, and city residents to such harsh political realities.

Talented mayors are able to perform best and escape falling into disgrace when they seek to provide effective leadership while, *in full partnership with the City Council*, they rely on knowledgeable professional experts to guide them and their governments to avoid troubling behaviors and errors while advancing constructive initiatives to solve problems and create fresh opportunities. Within that framework, an effective mayor provides informed and vigorous leadership for sustained accomplishment and to move a community forward. Sacramento's present Charter facilitates such responsible leadership.

It is useful for mayors, council members, and others to understand that *Leadership is not what an official does because he/she has power; LEADERSHIP IS THE INFLUENCE THAT ONE EXERTS WHEN PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE TO DO WHAT ONE COMMANDS*. It follows that such leadership, not personalized command-and-control structure, makes the difference for Star Performance in cities.