



*Senate
State of Louisiana*

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To: Members of the New Orleans City Council
Date: April 17, 2012

This Thursday, April 19th, the City Council will be considering a charter amendment to reform our current rank voting system into the traditional, and more logical, Council-At-Large A & B. We, the below signed members of the New Orleans Delegation of the State Legislature, would like to express our support for this very important reform measure to create a more equitable, concise and fair process for electing Council-At-Large members for the City of New Orleans.

The current system of rank voting allows for individuals who are running for city wide elected office to run in a group. Then the two (2) individuals that receive the largest portions above 25% are elected to these city wide positions. When casting ballots for this office, voters are allowed to vote for two individuals so that they can indicate which two candidates said voter would prefer.

This archaic method is problematic for two distinct reasons:

First, the current method of electing these very important positions allows for an individual who purports to represent the entire population of the City of New Orleans, analogous to the Mayor or Sheriff, to be elected by only a quarter of the population. This, on its face, would seem to indicate that At-Large members are not actually elected at large, or, at the very least, misrepresents the idea of an At-Large elected office.

Second, and more importantly, the rank voting process is fraught with opportunities for politically savvy individuals to manipulate the process so that their vote is actually counted more than once. Procedurally, individuals can artificially manipulate the existing process to vote once for the Council-At-Large position and, by denying any potential opponent their other vote, they are essentially giving their chosen candidate a one vote advantage over all potential challengers. Essentially, for purposes of ultimate vote tallying, that individual voter is procedurally voting twice for his chosen candidate.

After Hurricane Katrina, there was a concentrated effort to reform the City of New Orleans. The legislature was lobbied, extensively, by many groups from the City of New Orleans, including the City Council, to institute a host of reforms to

bring our city into the modern era. The legislature consolidated the Orleans Parish Levee District, consolidated the dual sheriffs of Orleans Parish, abolished the Registrar of Mortgages and Conveyances and merged our several assessors into a single office. The rationale, in all of these instances, is that New Orleans should move away from archaic processes that differ substantially from our neighbors throughout the state and that differ from the rest of the nation as a whole.

The New Orleans City Council has now been given a similar opportunity to abolish this archaic and confusing process that encourages political savvy factions within our city to manipulate the process of electing At Large candidates. As we have moved away from seven assessors, two sheriffs and numerous other old school processes that benefitted the politically powerful and their divisive political machines, it is time for our city to move into the 21st century with modern voting practices.

One vote should mean one vote. Individuals running for a citywide office, presenting themselves as representatives of all of our constituents, need to be elected by a majority of the citizens of our city. It is the most logical and fair evolution of our city's ongoing quest to promote best practices.

J. Monell
SEN. 3

John Carls Peterson
Senate Dist 5

Eduardo Lopez
DISTRICT 4

David N. [unclear]
Senate Dist 7

James Christopher [unclear]
State Rep. 97

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#100

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RAY GAROFALO
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Walter Pleguez, District 91