



# The League of Women Voters of Oakland

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The League of Women Voters - the place where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement  
May 17, 2010

The Honorable Ronald V. Dellums, Mayor  
Members of the Oakland City Council  
Oakland City Hall  
One Frank Ogawa Plaza  
Oakland, California 94612

Dear Councilmembers:

The League of Women Voters of Oakland is pleased to present the attached findings and recommendations regarding boards and commissions in the City of Oakland. The report contains twelve general recommendations which address size, appointment, operations, and communications issues. Key among these is the recommendation that a Councilmember liaison meet in person at least once a year with each board and commission, and that the board or commission adopt formal goals and set itself specific tasks and objectives in a cooperative process with the Councilmember. You should expect that boards and commissions will on the one hand, advise and assist you in carrying out your priorities for the City, and on the other, advise and assist you in setting those priorities.

The report also addresses two specific areas of concern. The first is the role and function of the oversight committees, which we suggest warrant a separate study. The second is the Workforce Investment Board, for which we offer specific findings and recommendations.

In addition, we offer the following observations and recommendations for your consideration.

## **Charter changes**

Some of the changes recommended may require changes in the city charter. We did not allow the need for a charter election to deter us from putting forward what we thought to be the best solution to a given problem.

## **Form 700**

In Los Angeles, all people nominated to positions in any government agencies are required to submit their conflict of interest disclosures before they are confirmed by

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the City Council. We recommend that Oakland adopt a similar policy for nominees to any board, commission or committee deemed to have power to make decisions in which the public might want to know about a potential conflict of interest before the appointment. These entities include, but are not limited to, the Children's Fund Planning and Oversight Committee, the Housing, Residential Rent and Relocation Board, the Planning Commission, the Public Ethics Commission, and the Workforce Investment Board.

### **New boards and commissions**

In the course of interviews with City Council members, one Council member indicated that she thought an entertainment commission would be helpful to advise the Public Safety Committee; another favored a traffic commission.

The League recommends that before establishing a new board or commission, the City Council appoint a task force to address the specific issues about which it seeks advice, giving the task force clear direction and a definite time in which to complete its tasks. The Council can review the work of the task force and seek the advice of task force members whether the subject warrants a permanent board or commission.

### **Next steps**

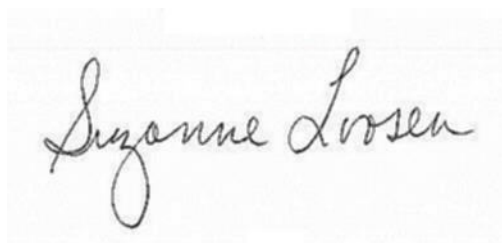
The League urges the Council to direct the City Administrator to appoint an interdisciplinary team to develop an implementation plan for these recommendations. This team should report back to the Council within six months.

We are happy to be of service, and hope that our report provides some direction for making Oakland city government ever more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all our citizens.

Sincerely,



Katherine Gavzy  
Co-Presidents



Suzanne Loosen

Cc: John Russo, City Attorney  
Courtney Ruby, City Auditor  
LaTonda Simmons, City Clerk