



Charter Review Committee
RE: Independent Office of City Auditor
December 19, 2011

Good evening Committee Members, I'm Joan Donahue, President of Riverside's LWV.

Riverside's League strongly supports the creation of a more independent Auditor's Office.

As you know - auditors keep government operations honest and efficient.

Ideally, the job calls for a team that is unquestionably unbiased. But, even with the best intentions, that characteristic can be difficult to maintain.

This is why many cities in CA, and across the nation, employ a city auditor whose office is separate from the departments it audits - and why those auditors report to legislative bodies - not the official who may be initially responsible for inaccuracies.

For our research, I contacted League Presidents in Sacramento, Oakland, Berkeley, Long Beach, San Jose and Stockton - all cities that employ more independent auditors.

Each League reported confidence in their offices - believing the offices:

- provided accurate and unbiased reports
- were transparent and improved efficiency,
- and residents felt comfortable bringing forward any concerns about fiscal management.

As you know, League members are serious government observers and vocal public policy advocates.

But with this polling, I got a sense of genuine civic pride from Leagues - noting that:

- their auditor's office has been in their Charter since its creation
- not to forget that their office did performance reviews
- that their auditor was willing to come and speak at meetings
- and more than once I was directed to their Auditor's websites to take a look at all the readily available reports that were posted and available to the public

Their pride makes sense. Not only are these offices smart government policy that lessens the appearance of conflict of interest - the openness and transparency they provide increases the good faith relationship between government and citizens.

We are lucky - many independent offices are results of bad situations, particularly those in Orange County and San Diego. Instead, we have the opportunity to create a better office on our own- one that will strengthen it's current accountability and effectiveness.

You have received enthusiastic support from the Auditors of Berkeley and Stockton - both Cities who improved their processes because their management or Councils believed it was the right thing to do.

We strongly urge you to offer this opportunity to our City Council and hopefully, to the people of Riverside.

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