

## **Lynn Swain**

No shortcuts should be used in getting the ballot initiative Elect Our Mayor on the ballot.

I am opposed to Councilman Will O'Neill's initiative to Elect Our Mayor in Newport Beach but that's only my opinion and some people feel differently.

Perhaps our citizens should make sure they fully understand all the underlying facts involved in electing the mayor, but most importantly how Will O'Neill is trying to circumvent the system to get this item airlifted onto a future ballot in the next few weeks.

Has anyone on the council asked for a thorough financial analysis of what impact this move will have on our city? Adding another layer of government, staffing this layer, adding in retirement costs and benefits all need to be analyzed with costs being projected out over several years.

Also, this initiative would create a second class of councilmember with less ability to represent his/her constituents because of redistricting which creates a larger number of people to represent and diminishes the importance of neighborhoods, villages and businesses within each district.

Newport Beach voters approved a term limit of eight years for councilpersons, including the mayor, for a very good reason. Councilman O'Neill's initiative would allow a councilperson who has served his eight years to then run for mayor, where he could potentially also serve two terms, i.e., another eight years!

The councilmembers have term limits, but the proposed elected mayor will serve without term limits.

Mr. O'Neill had 180 days from the date his amendment was certified to obtain 9,000 signatures to put this on the ballot for our citizens to vote on. Apparently, he's finding that's not such an easy task.

I can confirm that it's not, from my experience getting signatures for the Museum House initiative. It's a very difficult labor-intensive task but a large group of residents prevailed, and all worked hard together to get it done. It was a community effort.

Mr. O'Neill has now decided to circumvent the system by trying to "persuade" a majority of our City Council to vote yes to put his initiative on the ballot, instead of him getting the necessary 9,000 signatures required. Is that legal? Yes. But does it reflect the will of the people? I don't think so.

Whether or not this proposed agenda item appears on the ballot will depend on four votes being received from our City Council. Mr. O'Neill has a way of getting what he wants with little or no resistance from councilmembers, but please I am pleading with you our elected city councilmembers, to put this item on the ballot only after a thorough and complete public vetting of the reasons for and against this important change to our form of government.

Why don't we bring all of this to the community in the form of a series of Study Sessions, or just an old fashion Town Hall. Why not really listen to the community on this issue, rather than basing your decision on one person's idea of what our form of government should be – without any debate on the issues that are of critical importance to how our city is governed.

This decision should not be based on promises and favors.

In my mind, this should not happen this way. Will O'Neill is trying to arrange things to facilitate long-term control of our city without the messy process of debates and give and take and consent of the people. Yes, democracy is messy but it's better than the alternative (per Winston Churchill).

Please let's do this for the people and by the people!

Lynn Swain / Newport Beach