Friday, September 25, 2015

Mayor Bates and City Council

By email and hand

Re: Citizens Redistricting Commission Charter Amendment and Ordinance Amendment

Item 32 on Agenda for Sept 29, 2015

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

The League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville fully supports the proposal to create a Citizens Redistricting Commission to fulfill the City Charter requirements for redistricting every ten years following the US Census. We urge you to put the Redistricting Commission Charter Amendment as presented by the open Government Commission on the ballot for November 2016 and to subsequently adopt the accompanying proposed Ordinance Amendment.

The goal of removing redistricting from the realm of political and factional influences is one for which the League has fought hard and long, most recently in the successful adoption and work of the California Redistricting Commission. We are pleased to see that the Berkeley proposal was closely modeled after the process and standards the League supported in the state commission process.

Though the selection and administration of the Commission will require City resources to implement, our sincere hope is that a carefully structured, non-political process will ultimately streamline redistricting.

We congratulate the members of the Open Government Commission and City staff for their thorough and open discussions while reviewing and revising the original proposal by Councilmembers Arreguin and Capitelli. We note the change in prohibitions to serving, reducing from five years to two years the window of “non political involvement” before or after commission service. We appreciate there is a balance between avoiding political influences on the commission and having a large enough pool of interested, knowledgeable and available citizens.

Thank you for your time and attention to creating a non-political, deliberative process for defining our City Council districts. We look forward to a productive community discussion before the November 2016 election.

Yours,



Nancy Bickel, President

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