



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

1107 9th Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, California 95814
(916) 447-VOTE ▪

www.lwvsacramento.org ▪ www.smartvoter.org ▪ www.easyvoter.org

August 24, 2010

Mayor Kevin Johnson and Council Members
City Hall
Sacramento

RE: City Council Decision Limiting Early Public Comment

Dear Mayor Johnson and City Council Members,

On behalf of the citizens of the City of Sacramento, League of Women Voters is disappointed with the recent decision to trail the “Public Forum/Public Comment” portion of the City Council agenda to the end of the meeting. The Brown Act requirement to allow citizens to bring important items, which do not otherwise appear on the agenda, to the attention of the Council is an essential component of a representative democracy. This decision means it may now be impossible for you to hear legitimate concerns from those whom you represent because some of us may not be able to wait through a lengthy Council meeting for the opportunity to speak at a very late hour. Those dependent on public transit must catch the last bus/train by 9 p.m.

League of Women Voters proposes an alternative course of action that allows the City to comply with the intent of the Brown Act as well as just the letter of the law. If the City wishes to avoid long delays at the beginning of the meeting because of the public forum agenda item, then it can do so fairly, through the effective control of the meeting by the Mayor. Under the Brown Act, the presiding officer may limit the total number of speakers and the total time allocated for any agenda item. The League suggests that each speaker be allowed 3 minutes with a total time not to exceed 12 minutes at the beginning of the meeting. If additional time is needed to accommodate a larger number of speakers, then the “overflow” can be trailed to the end of the meeting.

Please consider this alternative because it will enhance fairness with a very tiny time cost at the beginning of the meeting. We urge the City Council to reevaluate its decision to push back the "Public Forum/Public Comment" to a time when most citizens will not be able to avail themselves of their rights under the law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lola Acosta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lola Acosta, President
League of Women Voters of Sacramento County