

# **PROPOSAL TO CREATE A CHARTER FOR A CITYWIDE CONGRESS OF NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS**

- **PREAMBLE**

- The Neighborhood Councils of the City of Los Angeles do hereby create this Charter to provide a more effective voice for the residents of Los Angeles to our City government, to create a more effective system of Neighborhood Councils to communicate with each other, and to fulfill our responsibility under the Los Angeles City Charter to hold a Congress of Neighborhoods.

- **Neighborhood Councils Have The Authority To Create A Congress of Neighborhood Councils**

- **Article IX of the Los Angeles City Charter Gives NCs This Right**

- The Charter requires the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to arrange Congress of Neighborhood meetings if requested to do so by recognized neighborhood councils;
- The Charter requires DONE to assist neighborhood councils in communicating with other neighborhood councils and with government officials;

- **Los Angeles Ordinance No. 174006 Confirms This Right**

- The ordinance requires DONE to
  - Coordinate meetings and facilitate communication among neighborhood councils; and
  - Help coordinate, arrange and convene the biannual Congress of Neighborhood Councils meetings;
- The ordinance states that the goals and objectives of the Neighborhood Council system include:
  - promoting and facilitating communication, interaction and collaboration among all neighborhood councils regarding their common and disparate concerns; and
  - fostering a sense of community for all people to express ideas and opinions about their neighborhoods and their government.

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## **PROPOSED MISSION STATEMENT FOR CONGRESS**

The Congress of Neighborhood Councils will:

- (1) Provide opportunities for NCs to communicate with each other on issues of common interest, including Citywide issues, regional issues, and local issues with Citywide or regional implications;
- (2) Establish a formal structure for NCs to speak with a collective voice on City issues;
- (3) Develop and maintain tools for effective communication among NCs;
- (4) Develop and maintain expertise on City issues;
- (5) Provide assistance to NCs regarding elections, bylaws and grievances;
- (6) Educate NCs about how to effectively bring issues before City government; and
- (7) Educate the public and City government about NCs.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES**

- The Congress is intended to enhance the ability of Certified NCs to have their voices heard on issues affecting their neighborhoods and the City, and is not intended to usurp or interfere with the role of individual NCs to voice opinions or positions on issues.
- All Certified NCs will be provided a full and equal opportunity to participate in the Congress of Neighborhood Councils.
- Each Certified NC may participate in the Congress to the extent it is willing and able; when an NC chooses to participate, it may participate on an equal level with all other NCs.
- The NC Congress will be open, public and inclusionary in its organization and its operations.
- The NC Congress will abide by all applicable federal, state, county and city constitutions, laws, ordinances and regulations.

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## BASIC STRUCTURE OF CONGRESS:

- The Congress is made up of the following three bodies that function together:

### 1. SENATE

- “Board of Directors” of Congress
- One representative per participating NC

### 2. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- Periodic gathering of NCs, NC Senators/Delegates; NC Board members; and stakeholders
- General Assembly will meet as the City Charter-mandated “Congress.”
- NCs shall have the sole authority to set the agenda and programs

### 3. OFFICE OF THE CLERK

- Permanent administrative body
- Monitors City agendas for issues of interest to NCs
- Responsible for communications between Congress and NCs
- Responsible for communications between Congress and City government.
- Distributes information to Senate and NCs
- Secretary shall be elected by the Senate
- Treasurer shall be elected by the Senate

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## SENATE

- Board of Directors of Congress
- Representative assembly of NCs
- Functions:
  - Determine what issues it will consider, review and discuss, and which issues it will refer to participating NCs for action
    - May propose actions and positions to individual NCs
    - Shall collect and tally the positions taken by individual NCs on issues
  - Oversight of and responsibility for holding General Assembly
  - Oversight of Clerk's Office, including communications prepared by Clerk's Office
- Structure:
  - One Senator and one alternate per participating NC
  - Each participating NC has one, equal vote
  - Senate shall organize itself and select officers at its first meeting
  - Regularly scheduled meetings
    - Rotate meetings throughout City
    - Open to public
    - Opportunity for public comment and stakeholder initiation of issues
  - Congress may create/disband committees as needed:
    - Administrative: e.g., Bylaws, Communications, Outreach
    - Substantive Issues: e.g., Land Use, Public Safety
    - Committees may be composed of Senators and other NC representatives

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- Reporting Results of Senate Vote on Issue:
  - Report must include detailed tally of votes
    - Number of NCs taking position on issue
    - List of NCs and position taken by each
  - Where possible, include statement of reasons/rationale
    - Minority has right to include statement of reasons/rationale

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## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

- Periodic gathering of NCs, NC Senators/Delegates, NC Board Members, and Stakeholders
- Scheduled by Neighborhood Councils through Senate
- Provides opportunity for networking among NCs and NC Board Members
- Provides opportunity for information from City departments and about City services
- To be held in conjunction with a meeting of Senate
- Include sessions to provide education about City issues
- Include sessions to provide education and assistance to NCs on NC administration and NC elections
- Sessions at NC Congress can result in recommendations/motions to Senate and/or NCs

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## **OFFICE OF THE CLERK**

- Secretary will be elected by Senate
- Responsible for administrative functions of Congress
  - Track all pending motions/issues before Congress
  - Keep Master Calendar
  - Disseminate information/reports to NCs, governmental entities and media
- Responsible for communications and outreach as directed by Senate
  - Maintain website
  - Maintain e-mail distribution lists
- Responsible for the Treasury and providing regular financial reports to the Senates
  - Treasurer will be elected by the Senate
- Responsible for monitoring agendas, etc. from ENS, discovering important issues, and transmitting reports to NCs, Senate, and Senate Committees
- Assigns motions/issues to Senate committee with subject matter jurisdiction

## **FUNDING/TREASURY**

- Possible Sources of Funding
  - City of Los Angeles/DONE
  - Assessments to participating NCs
  - Contributions from third parties
    - Foundations/non-profits

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## **CREATION OF THE CONGRESS AND AMENDMENT OF THIS CHARTER**

- **Creation of the Congress**
  - The Congress will be established upon the ratification of this Charter by at least twenty percent (20%) of certified Neighborhood Councils
  - The first meeting of the Senate will be held 60 days after ratification of this Charter by twenty percent (20%) of certified Neighborhood Councils
  - When an NC ratifies this Charter, that NC becomes a full and equal member of the Congress and becomes entitled to all of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of membership in the Congress
  
- **Amendment of This Charter**
  - This Charter may not be amended until the Congress has been in existence for at least 6 months
  - Any Senator may propose an amendment to this Charter
  - An amendment will be submitted to participating NCs if passed by majority vote at a regular meeting of the Senate
  - Any amendments to this Charter will not take effect unless and until ratified by participating NCs (unless decertified/suspended)
  - Must be ratified by 2/3 of NCs that vote on amendment within 6 months after submission to NCs