

Contact Information

Neighborhood Council: South Robertson Neighborhood Council

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Type of NC Board Action: For if Amended

Impact Information

Date: 10/06/2014

Update to a Previous Input: No

Directed To: City Council and Committees

Council File Number: 13-1364

Agenda Date:

Item Number:

Brief Summary: Low municipal election turnout undermines civic involvement and the legitimacy of the elected. The South Robertson Neighborhoods Council therefore recommends a number of initiatives and actions to encourage voter engagement. The full list of recommendations is attached.

Additional Information: Unanimously passed by SORO NC with a vote of 17 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain



**Council File: 13-1364**

## **Community Impact Statement**

**As adopted by vote of the full SORO NC governing board**

<b>Yes:</b> 17	<b>No:</b> 0	<b>Abstain:</b> 0	<b>Recuse:</b> 0
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**Date of vote:** 18 September 2014

By all measures, voter turnout in the last few elections in the City and County has been abysmal. It is a trend that undermines civic involvement and the legitimacy of the elected. As the LA Times put it:

“A democracy in which local officials are selected by just 1 in 5 or 1 in 8 or 1 in 10 voters is obviously not working.”

(<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-voter-turnout-20140822-story.html>)

Council President Herb Wesson therefore has asked the Neighborhood Councils to suggest ways to increase turnout.

### **Adopted Motion**

To help increase voter turnout in Los Angeles municipal elections, the South Robertson Neighborhoods Council suggests the following:

#### **I. Strategies for consolidation & cost reduction**

- a. **Sync municipal elections with State and Federal elections.** We have no opinion as to whether current terms should be shortened or lengthened.
- b. **Fewer special elections.**

#### **II. Strategies for increasing access**

- a. **Online voting.** To protect the integrity of the election, we feel the State should explore issuing a unique digital ID for registered voters. We should also remember that not all constituents have web access or basic computer skills—although smartphones are closing that divide.
- b. **Ability for voters to vote at any polling location.** If I work downtown but live in the Valley, it's going to be tough to make it back to vote. Would probably require a shift from printed to electronic voter rolls.
- c. **Extended voting hours.**
- d. **Guaranteed paid time off to allow employees to vote.**
- e. **Election day is a public holiday, like Memorial Day.** Other countries do this.

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- f. **Free transit to and from the polls.** Perhaps Metro could waive fares on election day. The City could also strike a deal with ride-share firms like Uber.

### III. Strategies for increasing awareness

- a. **Agnostic awareness campaign by social service agencies.** Targeted at low-turnout/disenfranchised communities.
- b. **Increased use of social media for awareness.** Reminders, etc.
- c. **"Heroes Vote" media campaign.** Features celebrities and sports stars talking about why it's important to your community that you vote.
- d. **More town halls and grassroots-organized debates.** Increases the likelihood that voters can see the candidates and make informed decisions. The advertising for these also serves to increase general awareness.
- e. **Strategies for motivating future voters**
- f. **Stronger civics curriculum throughout all school grades.** It is important to start early with this.
- g. **Awareness campaigns targeted to High Schools.** Particularly Seniors.
- h. **Bring-your-kid-to-the-polls.** Activities at the polling locations for young non-voters, to get them interested in voting and civic responsibility.

### IV. Strategies for a better informed electorate

- a. **Expanded translation services.** Applies to both election materials and in-person guides at polling locations.
- b. **More relevant and simple language for ballot measures.** It is difficult for voters to assess a measure that doesn't seem to relate to their daily lives.
- c. **Cultivating better candidates.** The parties should do a better job seeking out a more diverse and inspiring pool of potential candidates.

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**Submitted by:** Doug Fitzsimmons