

# PERSPECTIVES

## SAN BERNARDINO MEASURE C

### Cure one of SB's ills

By Rabbi Hillel Cohn

PRO

The time has long passed for us to make a specific change in our City Charter and that is why I support Measure C.

In May of 1999 my good friend Mayor Judith Valles appointed a "blue ribbon" committee of citizens to study San Bernardino's City Charter and to make recommendations. I agreed to serve on that committee.

Mayor Valles charged the committee with taking a good, hard look at the charter which in many ways seemed to be antiquated and unworkable. At the outset she shared with us her total frustration at getting things done at City Hall to help our city move forward. One of the major sources of her frustration was the uncommon provision that our city attorney be elected rather than appointed. Our committee met regularly for more than a year and we all became quite conversant with the charter and its limitations. Our committee decided to initiate a ballot measure to make a few major changes in the charter. One of them was to make the city attorney an appointed office rather than elected. That measure, on the ballot in the fall of 2000, was rejected by the voters primarily because it dealt

with a number of sections of the charter when, in retrospect, it should have dealt with each major issue separately.

Unfortunately, our city has continued to be stymied over the past 10 years and a major reason for our lack of progress has been the politics at City Hall in which our elected city attorney has arrogated to himself powers that clearly are not appropriate or wise.

Measure C will bring about greater competency in three important offices — the city attorney, city clerk and city treasurer. Measure C will assure that these three positions are held by competent professionals by setting set down criteria that will ensure our city will have the best possible people occupying those positions. They will be appointed based on their proven professional record, not on the basis of political maneuvering.

Measure C will cure one of the major ills that plagues our city government and that impedes progress.

Measure C will make us a city that will operate like the vast majority of California cities that have appointed city attorneys, clerks and treasurers.

Opponents of Measure C have said that they do not

want their right to vote taken away. Nor do I. But there are offices for which I need not vote. I do not vote for those people in whose hands are my destiny and the destiny of our nation and world — such as the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. They are appointed by the chief executive whom we, the people, elect to make good choices and their appointments are ratified by the legislators whom we elect. What is right for our country is right for our city. Our elected mayor and City Council, with the assistance of a highly competent city manager, should seek out people whose training qualifies them to serve as attorney, clerk and treasurer and who discharge their responsibilities responsibly and do not politicize them.

Over the past two-and-a-half years I have had the honor of chairing our city's bicentennial commemorations. I have spoken to more than 60 community groups and shared with them the pride we all need to take in our city's "Rich History" and our commitment to bringing about San Bernardino's "Bright Future." Measure C will do much to help us have a "Bright Future" and that is why I urge my fellow citizens to support it.

Rabbi Hillel Cohn is rabbi emeritus, Congregation Emanu El, San Bernardino/Redlands.

### Don't bypass ballot

By Joe Arnett

CON

The San Bernardino City Council majority — Virginia Marquez, Tobin Brinker, Fred Shorett, and Rikke Van Johnson — along with Mayor Pat Morris circumvented the ballot process required by election statute by moving Measure C forward despite little public support.

It is important to point out that part of the reason the council decided to take action was because Pastor Raymond Turner and his citizen group failed to collect the required number of signatures to place the measure on the Nov. 2 ballot.

Measure C supporters argue too many politicians and too few professional managers are the problem in San Bernardino.

Elected officials are not the problem. San Bernardino spends over \$15.5 million across 147 job descriptions where manager, director, supervisor, chief or assistant appears in the job title. I don't think most reasonable people feel 147 positions costing over \$15.5 million are too few managers.

Passage of Measure C will eliminate our right to vote for city attorney, clerk and treasurer, and enable the mayor and City Council majority to hire and fire those who disagree with their liberal policies. It threatens access to public records and government transparency, and will remove independent financial oversight.

If successful, the mayor will add three critical positions to his appointments. The mayor already appoints the police chief, fire chief and city manager and he can cast a tie-breaking vote at public meetings. How much more power does a mayor need?

Simply put, elected officials are beholden to the voters; appointed people are beholden to their hiring manager and take direction from them.

I don't want more Arden/Guthrie-style housing or parolees dumped again in our neighborhoods because of a lack of independent, voter-approved oversight.

Don't be fooled, supporters suggest wasteful spending and special interests get the way of good policy making. I'll remind the readers the council majority are the ones with the power to make policy decisions and spend tax money. They vote to spend money at every meeting, in spite of disagreements by the city attorney and others. Logically, it is impossible to place blame for what ails our city on people who don't control policymaking. The city attorney, clerk and treasurer don't get a vote.

If Measure C supporters are upset with the state of affairs in San Bernardino they should hold the council majority accountable, not the

ones who cry foul ball and then suggest they're obstructionists. Those in the majority are the ones who have done little for business or homeowners over the years. Recently the majority voted to reduce police and fire staffing. Last year, they voted to more than double costs for graffiti abatement and they have hired numerous new government staffers.

Ask yourself, can the city attorney, clerk or treasurer alone do anything about the problems facing San Bernardino? The answer is no — but the majority council and mayor can and should.

Instead of spending time on San Bernardino's real problems they've chosen with this action to spend over \$150,000 on a frivolous City Charter amendment. That money could be better spent on fixing smaller public projects throughout the city like parks, street lights, traffic signs or potholes. This should be their spending priority given the tight budget conditions.

For all the supporters' efforts to fix San Bernardino they appear to be missing the elephant in the room and are blinded by their own special interests.

Whom you vote for does matter! Don't give up your right to vote.

Visit [www.votenoona-measurec.com](http://www.votenoona-measurec.com) to learn more.

Joe Arnett is a former City Council candidate who lives in San Bernardino's 4th Ward.