

L.A. City Council Gives Neighborhood Councils More Say with DWP

LOS ANGELES, August 2010 – The Los Angeles City Council, voted 14-0 with Councilman Dennis Zine absent, Aug. 10, to amend the Rules and Elections Committee report by creating a ratepayer advocate for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to ensure that neighborhood council of community meeting and to make sure that the chief administrative and legislative officers work closely with the neighborhood council working group on the DWP. The two proposals were introduced by Council President Eric Garcetti to establish a new, independent customer advocate's office to oversee the DWP. The office would be established outside of the department or any political office. Only the voters can change the charter, insulating the office from future political or DWP interference.

A DWP budget reform motion also introduced by Garcetti would put on the ballot an amendment to the city charter that would push public scrutiny of the DWP budget and minimize the uncertainty in the city budget process. The amendment would require DWP to publicly present its budget well in advance of the budget deadline and change the current deadline that allows DWP to pass its budget after the overall city budget is passed.

The proposed reform charter amendment would require the department to present its proposed budget by April 20, which is when the Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is required to present the proposed city budget every year, and would require the DWP Board of Commissioners to pass the department's final budget by June 1.