



February 23, 2004

Dear Petition Circulator Volunteer,

Thank you for volunteering to collect registered voter signatures to put the 9 single member community based districts question on the ballot this November. In the packet I have included blank signature forms, a letter explaining why the Montgomery County Civic Federation is pursuing this Charter change, and frequently asked questions about petition signature collection.

We have until August to collect 10,000 valid Montgomery County registered voter signatures. In practice that means we need about 12,000 signatures. Please return completed signature forms monthly to:

Dale Tibbitts
9511 St. Andrews Way
Silver Spring, MD 20901-3261

Please return any partially completed or unused forms when you finished collecting signatures. My phone numbers are: 301-219-6475 cell, 301-587-9358 home, 202-789-2004 work. My email address is DATibbitts@aol.com

Some comments and observations:

1. If you download the petition from the MCCF website, you MUST copy the summary/full text page on the back of the signature form.
2. A difficult part of collecting petition signatures is determining if the person is a registered voter in Montgomery County. All the people exiting the polls from the March 2 primary election are registered voters. I recommend trying for their signature on the way out.
3. You may collect signatures outside of Giant food stores on Saturday and Sundays, if you get permission from the store manager. The store manager can refuse if there is another outside activity scheduled. This policy is from the Landover headquarters.
4. If you wish to go door to door in your neighborhood, contact me for your precinct's registered voter list.

Again, I wish to thank you for your effect.

Sincerely,

Dale Tibbitts



December 3, 2003

The Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF) supports changing the County Council representation to 9 single-member districts and 0 at-large districts. The MCCF overwhelmingly adopted this resolution at its May 12, 2003 general delegation meeting.

In supporting the resolution, the MCCF considered:

The 2000 census population of Montgomery County is 873,341. Montgomery County is larger than six states (AK, DE, ND, SD, VT, WY) and the District of Columbia.

The average population of a County Council district is 174,668. A Council district is larger than a Maryland state legislative district by 65,500 people.

A Montgomery County Council at-large seat is the second largest legislative jurisdiction in the State of Maryland behind a statewide US Senate seat.

The cost of countywide political campaigns has escalated. The six competitive candidates for the 2002 Council at-large seats raised an average of \$132,000 each. The End Gridlock slate and Citizens for Quality Living advocacy group raised an additional \$325,000. County Executive Douglas Duncan contributed more than \$400,000 to the End Gridlock slate. Neighbors for a Better Montgomery PAC raised \$63,000. These additional monies substantially increased the financial stakes in the at-large Council races.

Potential qualified candidates are discouraged from running because of the overwhelming fundraising requirement to mount a competitive race. The lack of diversity stifles political discourse.

Large donors with special interests dominate political contributions. Nearly 50% of political contributions are from just one business sector.

Those large special interest contributors appear to exert undue influence on County policies and actions.

Direct personal voter contact and grassroots organizing have been overwhelmed by impersonal, excessive campaign financial expenditures.

Smaller, neighborhood districts in which a candidate can effectively organize, be personally known and campaign with fewer financial resources will compensate for the trend towards



increasing political contributions by special interests thus resulting in a better representative county government.

We believe that community policing, community prosecution, and community based planning are desirable because they put the government closer to the citizens it serves, why not community representation?

Background

The MCCF is dissatisfied with how the current 4 at-large/5 districts system has ended up working in practice and created an Electoral Reform Task Force in response.

At the April 14, 2003 general delegation meeting MCCF discussed:

1. The current system of 4 at-large / 5 districts.

a. It is very expensive to run at-large. In the 2002 election, Steve Silverman raised \$265,081 from 838 contributors, \$316 avg.; Michael Subin - \$156,608, 751 contributors, \$209 avg.; Nancy Floreen - \$103,399, 488 contributors, \$212 avg.; Leventhal - \$134,155, 788, \$170 avg.; Ewing - \$100,439, 778, \$129 avg.; Elrich - \$33,702, 299, \$113 avg.; Renzi - \$118,486 (\$113,876 from candidate), \$4610 from 37 contributors; and Ann Somerset - \$7315, 29 contributors, \$252 avg. Duncan contributed \$405,000 to the End Gridlock slate. End Gridlock raised an additional \$179,325 from non-candidate sources. The advocacy group, Citizens for Quality Living raised \$145,750. Neighbors for a Better Montgomery raised \$63,090.

The at-large races have become so expensive that the large special interest contributors are effectively buying them.

A recent study conducted for the state's The Study Commission on Public Funding of Campaigns in Maryland (Stenberg Commission) by The Center of American Politics and Citizenship of the University of Maryland and The Schaefer Center for Public Policy of the University of Baltimore found that **94%** of the survey respondents thought that campaign contributions influence the policies supported by state elected officials. The study also found that **75% believe that fundraising is a major source of political corruption.** The public perception of the political process is that it is broken. (See attached report)

b. There are 470,000 registered voters in Montgomery County. The at-large council seat is the second largest legislative jurisdiction in the state behind US Senate. There are 250,000 Democrats and 128,000 Republicans. In general elections, 255,000 have voted in 3 out of the last 4 elections. Those 255,000 voters live at 189,000 unique addresses. To bulk rate mail a piece of literature to 189,000 addresses would cost about \$51,000 (\$.17 postage & \$.10 production cost). If



you just mailed to the 105,000 homes of consistently voting Democrats, it would cost \$28,350 per mailing.

Since most races in Montgomery County are decided in the primary, there are 91,000 unique addresses of consistent Democratic primary voters which translates to \$24,570 per mailing. There are 40,800 unique addresses of consistent Republican primary voters. Campaign professionals would recommend approximately 6 mailings in addition to other forms of voter contact. For a Democratic primary candidate that totals \$147,420 (6 x \$24,570).

c. Given the large area of the County, it is difficult to campaign in person. Only the most populous areas and events ever see the candidate. As campaigns become more expensive, more distant and less personal, trust and participation in the electoral process decreases.

d. A voter may inadvertently contribute to the defeat his/her favored candidate with his/her own vote. The following is a highly artificial example to illustrate how this could happen. This pattern could be multiplied by hundreds of voters. Candidate A receives 1000 votes, Candidate B 900, Candidate C 800, Candidate D 750, Candidate E 749, and Candidate F 500. If the voter's preferred candidate choices were E and F, but voted for C and D to use all 4 votes, he/she just gave Candidate D the one vote margin of victory over favored Candidate E.

e. Approximately 108,000 voters turned out to vote in the Democratic primary September 15, 2002. Each had 4 votes available to cast for at-large County Council. Of the potential 432,000 votes, only 356,988 were cast. 17.4% of available votes were not used.

f. With the evolution of highly coordinated campaigns, slates and cash, theoretically 50%+1 of the voting population could control all 4 at-large seats and the remaining 49.9% would not have even one representative of their choice. While win-take-all is fair in an election where only one person can be elected, it is less fair in a multi-seat election. Greatly simplified, in the September 2002 primary 48,181+ Democratic voters have their 4 choices for at-large councilmembers and 47,041 Democratic primary voters have 0 of their choices. Independent and Republican voters' choices are unknown.

2. Change to 9 smaller neighborhood single member districts.

- a. Smaller districts allow a candidate without huge contributions to compensate by developing a grassroots network, meet with more local groups, walk the district, and reduce mailing costs.
- b. Greater potential for a minority to run in a smaller, local district.
- c. Likely a larger pool of candidates.
- d. Greater attention to local problems.
- e. More even distribution of elected officials across the county.



Observations:

- a. The majority of state legislatures, city and county councils are organized as single member districts.
- b. With single member districts, 5 votes are still needed to pass legislation thereby mitigating purely parochial interests that don't generally benefit the county as a whole. Coalition building is necessary.
- c. For comparison purposes, there are 8 legislative districts in the county with approximately 110,000 each.

2000 Census Montgomery County population = 873,341
 $873,341 / 5 = 174,668$ (current council districts)
 $873,341 / 6 = 145,557$
 $873,341 / 7 = 124,763$
 $873,341 / 8 = 109,168$ (current state legislative districts for comparison)
 $873,341 / 9 = 97,037$
 $873,341 / 11 = 79,395$

2010 projected population = 1,000,000
 $1,000,000 / 5 = 200,000$
 $1,000,000 / 9 = 111,111$

After thorough examination and deliberation, the Montgomery County Civic Federation believes that 9 smaller, community based districts will create the best, most representative form of local government for the citizens of Montgomery County.

Respectfully Submitted,

Handwritten signature of Cary Lamari in black ink.

Cary Lamari
President
15411 Baileys Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20906

Handwritten signature of Dale A. Tibbitts in black ink.

Dale A. Tibbitts
Chair, MCCF Electoral Reform Task Force
9511 St. Andrews Way
Silver Spring, MD 20901

The Montgomery County Civic Federation is a nonprofit, educational and advocacy countywide umbrella civic group founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. For other MCCF positions, standing resolutions, membership, newsletters, and informative links, visit www.montgomerycivic.org
