

WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS? <http://www.protectourcharter.com>

The Bellingham City Council just passed an ordinance to make it more difficult to exercise our rights to Initiative, Referendum and Recall, as granted to us in the City Charter and by State Law.

The city knows that the people are supposed to vote on Charter changes, as shown in their original resolution proposal, written by the city attorney in 2004:

“WHEREAS...the City Council finds that the best interests of the City would be served if the qualified voters of the City were presented with the opportunity to modify the existing City Charter by the adoption of the following amendments...”

But, fearing that their changes would lose at the polls, they passed an ordinance instead, and deprived citizens of their right to approve the changes.

SO WHAT?

The Charter specifies procedural requirements for due process in all aspects of city government. If we allow council to meddle with the Charter by passing ordinances, much more than initiative rights could be affected. They already have further encroachments in mind. In the administration's own words to council:

Other major proposals discussed, but not brought forward at this time, involve...

- **changing the percentages of signatures required to place measure on the ballot;**
- **changing the Finance Director from an elective to an appointed position; and**
- **changing the duties and scope of the Civil Service system.**

Really? Require even *more signatures* for Citizens Initiatives? *Discard the election* of the Finance Director and the *people's control over who counts their money*? And just how do they want to *change our civil service laws*?

Such pervasive designs on the People's Charter are dangerous. The Charter was written and approved by the voters when Bellingham became a Charter City. It is the very basis of due process in city government. The Charter is very specific about the people's control over Charter amendments:

“Any amendment or amendments to this Charter may be proposed in the City Council, and, if the same shall be agreed to by a majority of all the members thereof, such proposed amendment or amendments shall be submitted to the electors of the City for their ratification, at the next state or municipal general election...”

WHY DID THE COUNCIL REFUSE TO LET US VOTE ON THIS AMENDMENT?

The council says they passed their ordinance to be helpful. Taking away our rights is not helpful! They say they are “clarifying” the Initiative process to avoid “confusion”. However, four of the last five citizen ballot measures have been purposefully scuttled by the City. The “confusion” has originated with a hostile administration, not the Charter.

WHY DOES THIS CONCERN ME? HOW CAN I HELP? <http://www.protectourcharter.com>

Civil rights are hard won but easily lost. The City's new ordinance attacks a fundamental principle of our democracy. It signals a slippery slope for many other provisions of our government. ***We only have until June 15 to collect 1,460 signatures.*** Download copies of the Referendum (front and back) from the web site and help get signatures from your friends and family. If you only get a few signatures, you will have done a lot. Don't worry if the page isn't filled. Mail it in before it gets lost.

- 1) Print a few copies of this flyer to help explain this complex issue (same website).
- 2) Volunteer to spend an hour or two at the Food Coop or in front of the library, getting signatures before the deadline.
- 3) Tell others about the website so that they may download their own copy of the Referendum (front and back) and help get a few signatures.
- 4) Everyone: be sure and sign the bottom of the page, and return them to the address on the bottom. (If you can't return it in time, just call 393-7784 and we will come get it!)