

# COLUMBUS CITY COUNCIL

ANDREW J. GINTHER, *PRESIDENT*  
A. TROY MILLER, *PRESIDENT PRO TEM*  
HEARCEL F. CRAIG  
ZACHARY M. KLEIN  
MICHELLE M. MILLS  
EILEEN Y. PALEY  
PRISCILLA R. TYSON



City Hall 90 West Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-9015  
614/645-7380 Fax 614/645-6164  
columbuscitycouncil.org

*CITY CLERK- Andrea Blevins, CMC*  
*DEPUTY CITY CLERK- Darla M. Character-Johnson, Esq.*

July 9, 2012

Mr. Jonathan C. Beard  
Columbus Coalition for Responsive Government  
1051 E. Main Street  
Columbus, OH 43205

Dear Mr. Beard:

On Monday, July 9, 2012, Columbus City Council passed Ordinance 1585-2012, and as a result, the proposed amendment to the City Charter advanced by the Columbus Coalition for Responsive Government will not be placed on the November 2012 ballot due to insufficient valid signatures.

City Council has taken great steps to ensure the integrity of the democratic process, and to protect your right to amend the Charter. However, with every right comes responsibility. Your petition failed to meet the minimum requirements for a citizen initiated Charter amendment to be placed on the ballot, containing more than 10,000 fewer valid signatures than necessary to place the issue before voters.

Now that the legal sufficiency of the petition signatures has been determined, we wish to share with you City Council's opposition to your proposed charter amendment.

Columbus is a great city. Our economy is bouncing back faster and stronger than any other city in Ohio, and we have the lowest unemployment rate in the state. In fact, we have been recognized among the 20 strongest economies coming out of the recession, and as the best city in the Midwest for job growth.<sup>i</sup> City Council is working hard to maintain that momentum, and to continue to grow the Columbus economy through an unprecedented investment in economic development and with a renewed focus on small businesses.

Columbus continues to provide a great quality of life for residents of all ages, and of all walks of life. Business Week named Columbus the #1 place in Ohio to raise children.<sup>ii</sup> We are a top destination for young adults in the Midwest, and Forbes named Columbus the #1 most affordable place to retire.<sup>iii</sup> This is a tribute to our safe, healthy and strong neighborhoods supported by City Council's continued investment in neighborhood infrastructure projects, community-based safety initiatives and important city services like curbside recycling, graffiti removal, our recreation centers and swimming pools.

Columbus is also a city that embraces diversity, and continues to grow as those we welcome to our hometown to visit often choose to stay. We were named among the 15 most immigrant-friendly cities in America, the 2011 "Up-and-Coming LGBT City" and BET's #2 city in the U.S. for African American Families.<sup>iv</sup>

All of this – and so much more – has been possible because of the effective partnership between City Council, Mayor Coleman, Auditor Dorrian, City Attorney Pfeiffer, and the hundreds of Columbus residents who volunteer their time, energy and talent on our Area Commissions and in our civic and business associations. Columbus works because we work together.

Your proposed charter amendment would threaten our positive momentum by limiting the power of citizens, disenfranchising our diverse community, and creating a dysfunctional Council that is no longer focused on moving every neighborhood and our City, as a whole, forward.

Currently, Councilmembers serve the entire city. Each of us is equally accountable to every single voter at every single election. We are deeply concerned about a proposal that would expand city government while at the same time, strip voters of the long-held right to vote for ALL Councilmembers.

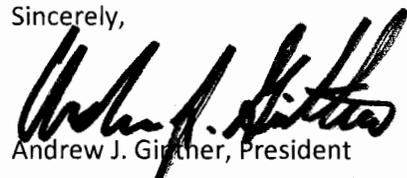
One of Columbus' greatest strengths is our open, inclusive and diverse community. That diversity is reflected on City Council, where the voters of our entire City have elected women, minority and LGBT members of Council. Much recent study shows that wards can actually decrease minority voter participation, as well as the quality and quantity of minority representation. Research also shows that, since the 1970s, minority representation has grown fastest in cities with at-large City Councils.<sup>v</sup>

We are equally concerned that wards – even in a mixed system – would lead to horse-trading, gridlock, political infighting, and narrowly-focused policies that would pit neighborhoods against each other to the detriment of our City as a whole. That is a risk we cannot afford to take.<sup>vi</sup>

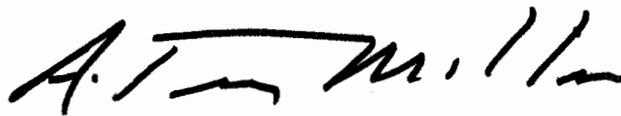
There is great diversity among the 30 largest cities in America because each has a unique history and a unique set of opportunities and challenges. Our commonly-referenced peer cities have tried a variety of government forms. Indianapolis is part of a city/county council. Portland has a city commission, where commissioners make policy and manage departments. Charlotte has a city manager/council government. Seattle has an at-large council like Columbus. There is no one right way, but we know the Columbus way is working.

Moving forward, Columbus City Council will continue to focus on the needs of our entire community, knowing that we are accountable to every citizen, neighborhood, and area of our City.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Girther, President  
Columbus City Council



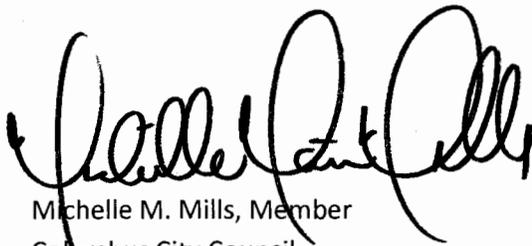
A. Troy Miller, President Pro Tem  
Columbus City Council



Hearcel F. Craig, Member  
Columbus City Council



Zach M. Klein, Member  
Columbus City Council



Michelle M. Mills, Member  
Columbus City Council



Eileen Y. Paley, Member  
Columbus City Council



Priscilla R. Tyson, Member  
Columbus City Council

cc: Michael B. Coleman, Mayor  
Hugh Dorrian, Columbus City Auditor  
Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr., Columbus City Attorney

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/lifestyle/twenty-us-metros-on-the-brink-of-recovery-06282011.html#p2> and <http://www.newgeography.com/content/002211-large-cities-rankings-2011-best-cities-job-growth>.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2008-11-07/the-best-places-to-raise-your-kidsbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.bizjournals.com/columbus/stories/2010/03/15/daily5.html?surround=etf&ana=e\\_article](http://www.bizjournals.com/columbus/stories/2010/03/15/daily5.html?surround=etf&ana=e_article) and [http://www.forbes.com/2008/08/27/retirees-cities-affordable-forbeslife-cx\\_md\\_0827realestate.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/08/27/retirees-cities-affordable-forbeslife-cx_md_0827realestate.html)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.mainstreet.com/slideshow/lifestyle/most-immigrant-friendly-cities-america> and <http://www.gaycities.com/outthere/8549/best-of-gaycities-2010-and-the-winners-are/>

<sup>v</sup> See, for example, "Expert gives pros, cons of ward system," Elgin TribLocal, July 22, 2011; Sass, Tim R. and Mehay, Stephen. 1995. "The Voting Rights Act, District Elections, and the Success of Black Candidates in Municipal Elections." *Journal of Law and Economics*. 38 (October): 367-392; Sass Tim R. And Stephen L. Mehay. 2003. Minority Representation, Election method, and Policy Influence. *Economics & Politics* 15 (November), 323-339; Meier, Kenneth J., Eric Gonzalez Juenke, Robert D. Wrinkle, and J.L. Polinard. 2005a. "Structural Choices and Representational Biases: The Post-Election Color of Representation," *American Journal of Political Science*; Meier, Kenneth J., Walker, Meredith, and Walker, Sade. "Structure, Party, Representation and Race: The Puzzles of Black Education Policy."; Michelson, Melissa. "The Voting Rights Act of 1965." Presentation, 2005; Svava, James H. 2003. "Two Decades of Continuity and Change in American City Councils." Professor of Political Science and Public Administration North Carolina State University, Commission by the National League of Cities; Lee, Eugene C., and Jonathan S. Rothman. "San Francisco's District Election Alters Electoral Politics." *National Civic Review* 67 (April): 173-178; Costa, Patrick John. "Switch: A Case Study of Voter Turnout following Electoral Change in a School Board Election." Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; and Hajnal, Zoltan and Trounstone, Jessica. 2005; "Where Turnout Matters: The Consequences of Uneven Turnout in City Politics." *The Journal of Politics*, 67 (May), 515-535; Gay, Claudine. 2001. "The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 95 (3): 589-602; and Guinier, Lani. 1994. *The Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy*. New York: The Free Press.

<sup>vi</sup> Baqir, Reza. 2002. "Districting and Government Overspending." *Journal of Political Economy* 110(6): 1318-54.; and Southwick, Jr. Lawrence. 1997. "Local Government Spending and At-Large Versus District Representation: Do Wards Result in More Pork?" *Economics & Politics* 9 (July); "Conflict and Cooperation in Municipalities: Do Variations in Form of Government Have an Effect?" *Urban Affairs Review*; Crain, W. Mark. 1997. "District, Diversity, and Fiscal Biases: Evidence from the American States," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Economic Association; Feiock, Richard C. and Hyung-Jun Park. "District Representation, Economic Development, and the Law of 1/N: How Constituency Diversity Shapes Policy Choices." Askew School of Public Administration and Policy, Florida State University.