



Greater Toluca Lake Neighborhood Council
(GTLNC)
Resolution



Passed on Tuesday, June 17th, 2025

Position: SUPPORT
Vote: 9 / 0 / 0

Declaration of Commitment to Representative Government

Having reviewed and considered the objections of two attorneys from the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office seeking to constrain its free speech and advocacy, GTLNC finds their arguments unconvincing and contrary to its independence and sovereignty, and to the representative capacity and fiduciary duty promised and owed to the stakeholders and People of Greater Toluca Lake.

While reaffirming and remaining true to the conditions and obligations of elected office, GTLNC objects to the attempt to interfere with and constrain the collective First Amendment and other rights of GTLNC, its Directors and Officers, and to abridge the communication of its resolutions and advocacy to any level of local, county, state or federal government relevant to and on behalf of its stakeholders, voters, residents and taxpayers under its own authorized, unique and unambiguous name, while avoiding the likelihood of confusion with the official positions of the City of Los Angeles by its policymakers and officers.

GTLNC further disagrees with the anonymous and unattributed opinions proclaimed in an unsigned memorandum entitled *The Role of Neighborhood Councils as Advisors to City Decision-Makers* dated August 2020, as a limitation on its protected expressions of opinion (Exhibit 1, attached).

As its own democratically constituted body, having been duly elected by the qualified registered stakeholder voters of Greater Toluca Lake, and operating in accordance with its obligations, and acceptable, reasonable and transparent parameters, GTLNC shall not allow its autonomy and self-determination to be interfered with or infringed upon, nor have its identity and independence subordinated or subsumed.

GTLNC urges its fellow Neighborhood Councils to likewise reject the unjustified meddling and intrusions into its public interest services by City staff.

The Greater Toluca Lake Neighborhood Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tess Taylor".

By: _____

Tess Taylor
President

GTLNC BOARD ACTIONS AFFIRMING THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PROPOSED DECLARATION

At its Special Board Meeting on Tuesday, April 22nd, 2025, after hearing public testimony, deliberating, and over the objection of GTLNC's DONE representative, GTLNC passed a resolution by unanimous decision (10 / 0 / 0) to support the California Legislature's consideration of Entertainment Industry Bills which affect the economy of the City of Los Angeles and Greater Toluca Lake.

GTLNC voted likewise on state legislation and to oppose SB 79 (VOTE: 12 / 0 / 0) on Tuesday, March 18th, 2025, and voted to oppose then-current Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón Policies (VOTE: 9 / 0 / 0) on Tuesday, November 14th, 2023.

It should be noted that other Neighborhood Councils have appropriately advocated for their respective stakeholders both within the City of Los Angeles and to other agencies and levels of government where the interest of such stakeholders were actually or potentially affected.

OPINION ATTEMPTS TO LIMIT GTLNC FUNCTION AND ADVOCACY

The City asserts it is improper for GTLNC – or any Neighborhood Council (NC) – to advocate to any agency or entity other than to the City itself and that this is outside the role of NCs. The City offers an unsigned memo captioned *The Role of Neighborhood Councils as Advisors to City Decision-Makers* dated August 2020 (the “Memo”) (Exhibit 1) which is nowhere on the Web sites of the Los Angeles City Attorney, Los Angeles City Clerk or of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE). The only online copy can be found in one obscure location: the Northridge West NC's Web Site.

Los Angeles City Charter Section 900 (from Article IX, creating Department of Neighborhood Empowerment): “Purpose. To promote more citizen participation in government and make government more responsive to local needs, a citywide system of neighborhood councils, and a Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is created. Neighborhood councils shall include representatives of the many diverse interests in communities and *shall have an advisory role on issues of concern to the neighborhood* [emphasis added].”

GTLNC disagrees with this interpretation taken by the City, as nothing contained in the City Charter or Ordinances prohibit NCs from taking a position and advocating to non-city entities.

NO LIKELIHOOD OF CONFUSION

GTLNC does not represent, nor purport to represent, the City of Los Angeles, and there is no credible evidence to the contrary. There is no likelihood of confusion between GTLNC and the City of Los Angeles, nor any of its departments or agencies. Any position GTLNC may take on behalf of its stakeholders is distinguished with this clear disclaimer:

“GTLNC’s position may not reflect the official position of the City of Los Angeles.”

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS ARE VITAL COMMUNICATION HUBS

GTLNC is relied upon as a central source by our elected representatives from all branches of government to communicate with people in Greater Toluca Lake via GTLNC regular board and committee meetings, its email newsletter and social media accounts. Is this intended to be one-way communication only? How counterintuitive is it that GTLNC can’t express its collective view? GTLNC must have the unfettered right to advocate for the people who elected us.

DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION

The NC system was created in 1999 to address the San Fernando Valley’s claim of the failure of representative democracy and its threat to secede from the City of Los Angeles. NCs are intended to be “the closest form of government to the people” according to DONE. NCs act as volunteer service providers and buffers for Los Angeles City Councilmembers, each of whom represent over a quarter of a million Angelenos. Compare the levels of representation provided by GTLNC with the disproportionate population concentrations of other elected officials:

Elected Body

GTLNC
Number of GTLNC Board of Directors / Board Members

Population

15,000 est.
15

High Concentration Counterparts

City of Los Angeles
Number of Los Angeles City Councilmembers

3,770,958 (2025)
15

High Concentration Counterparts (cont.)

	<u>Population</u>
County of Los Angeles	9,663,345 (2025)
Number County Board Supervisors	5
29th US Congressional District: U.S. Representative Luz Rivas	719,359 (2023)
United States Senators: Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff	40,000,000 (2025)
27th State Senate District: Senator Henry Stern	993,140 (2020)
44th State Assembly District: Assemblymember Nick Schultz	514,564 (2020)
5th Supervisorial District: Supervisor Kathryn Barger	1,896,455 (2021)
3rd Board of Equalization: Antonio Vazquez	10,000,000
City of Los Angeles Population	3,770,958 (2025)
City of Los Angeles Council District 2: Councilmember Adrin Nazarian	256,691 (2010)
LAUSD	520,000 Students
LAUSD-Board of Education 6th District, Rep. Kelly Gonez	Approx. 74,285
Metropolitan Water District of So. California	19,000,000
Greater L A County Vector Control	6,000,000
L A County Flood Control	2.1M Land Parcels

UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

In its decision Bond v. Floyd, 385 U.S. 116 * (1966), the United States Supreme Court held (in part):

“[D]ebate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open.” ... “Legislators do not forfeit their constitutional rights to speak out on public issues” Chief Justice Earl Warren reasoned that “while the State has an interest in requiring its legislators to swear to a belief in constitutional processes of government, surely the oath gives it no interest in limiting its legislators’ capacity to discuss their views of local or national policy.”

Warren’s opinion provided broad free-speech protection for legislators’ political speech. “The manifest function of the First Amendment in a representative government requires that legislators be given the widest latitude to express their views on issue of policy,” Warren wrote. “Just as erroneous statements must be protected to give freedom of expression the breathing space it needs to survive, so statements criticizing public policy and the implementation of it must be similarly protected.”

** Citation error corrected on August 11th, 2025.*

CONCLUSION:

GTLNC and its 98 NC counterparts throughout Los Angeles contribute substantial and valuable volunteer time, labor, services and resources - often without even reimbursement of direct out-of-pocket expenses - for the benefit of the City and their respective communities, with zero or near-zero undesirable effects on the City of Los Angeles. NC Board members and Officers are probably the only institutionalized labor force in the City of Los Angeles which is completely unrepresented and uncompensated - and with no pension and medical benefits, and no sick leave or paid vacations.

It is a waste of taxpayer funds and a misapplication of precious resources to attempt to make controversial such petty and inconsequential matters as the ones raised. This is made more painfully obvious in the midst of recent disclosures about Councilmember bribery and staff corruption, management incompetence, squandered and missing public funds, disabled contractor tracking mechanisms, uncollected fees and fines, budget deficits and pending layoffs.

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Preliminary list of recipients, subject to confirmation and possible supplementation.
This list is for information purposes only and is not part of the subject resolution itself.

To: Mayor Karen Bass

Joey Freeman, Deputy Mayor, Intergovernmental Affairs
Jared Rivera, Deputy Mayor, Office of Community Engagement
Marissa Bowman, Director of Community Engagement
Michelle Vergara, Director of Community Engagement, Van Nuys
Betsaira Aguilera, East Valley Area Representative, Community Engagement, Van Nuys
Members of the Los Angeles City Council

cc: Los Angeles City Attorney

Hydee Feldstein Soto, City Attorney
Elise Ruden, Team Leader, Neighborhood Council Advice Department
Ayelet Feiman, Neighborhood Council Advice Department

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

Carmen Chang, General Manager
Erica Gatica Doughty, Neighborhood Empowerment Advocate

Exhibit 1



THE ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS AS ADVISORS TO CITY DECISION-MAKERS

Los Angeles City Charter Section 900 specifies that neighborhood councils "shall have an advisory role on issues of concern to the neighborhood." Some neighborhood councils have suggested that this language allows their boards to communicate their positions directly with county, state, and/or federal legislators. However, this interpretation conflicts with the Mayor and City Council's role under the Charter.

The Charter vests the City Council with the power to establish the City's official position on local, state or federal legislation, rules, regulations and policies, subject to the Mayor's veto (Charter Section 254). Administrative Code Section 2.19 sets forth a detailed process the City must follow to take an official position. Pursuant to that Section, "No person or department affiliated with the City of Los Angeles may represent that the City of Los Angeles supports, opposes, seeks, wishes to amend or has any position regarding any legislation, rules, regulations or policies unless such position has been adopted as an official position of the City of Los Angeles." Further, the Charter confers on the Mayor the power to engage in and supervise intergovernmental relations (Charter Section 231(h)).

The Charter's specification of these roles ensures a system where the City speaks with one voice to avoid confusion on matters involving county, state or federal legislation and other issues. Neighborhood councils, in their advisory role, are permitted to send their board-approved positions to the City Council and Mayor. Also, neighborhood council board members may in their individual capacity advocate for or against county, state or federal issues as long as it is made clear that they are communicating in their private capacities and not using public resources to present their opinions. Board members may use their neighborhood council titles for identification purposes only.

Revised August 2020

Exhibit 1 (continued)

Neighborhood councils serve an important role by weighing in on city business before decisions are made and are expected to bring issues of community concern to city departments and leaders. Thus, as advisory bodies by design, an effective neighborhood council can advise city decision-makers and present an important perspective upon which elected officials may rely. However, it is ultimately and exclusively within the elected officials' authority acting as collectively as the City Council and Mayor to determine and convey the City's position on legislation and similar policy issues.

Revised August 2020