



WHY I AM VOTING NO ON LONG BEACH, CA MEASURE JB

By Adreana Langston

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I Was For Measure JB Before I Was Against It

“There is no world where it should take 10-12 months to hire someone for a City Job. That’s why I plan to vote yes on Measure JB.” This is a

paraphrase of a comment from a Long Beach Neighbor on reddit/r/LongBeach regarding the City of Long Beach Measure JB coming up on the November 2024 ballot.

And two months ago I was right there with that commenter. Back in 2021 during the campaign for Long Beach, California Mayor I had attended two fundraisers for mayoral candidates. One was a known Democrat and one was a known Republican. Both mentioned in their stump speeches the fact that the city of Long Beach had a number of unfilled positions and that the hiring process had some inefficiency in it that slowed it down. One mayoral candidate explained that there were two separate departments in charge of hiring, Civil Service and Human Resources and that they duplicated each other’s work, thus retarding the entire process.

When I read the text of Measure JB, it made sense that combining those two departments would increase efficiency and make city hiring faster. Upon first reading, I planned to vote yes on Measure JB.

But then I ran across some people who educated me to what the real implications were of Measure JB.

What Measure JB Is Really About

Measure JB's marketing states that it will consolidate Civil Service and Human Resources. The fine print indicates that Measure JB will abolish the Civil Service Commission. I now believe the abolishment of Civil Service will open the door to cronyism in hiring in Long Beach and reduce accountability of Long Beach officials. I also do not believe that the Civil Service Commission being a separate entity from City of Long Beach Human Resources is in any way,

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shape or form responsible for the august pace of the hiring process for city positions, *especially* not for the Long Beach Police Department.

What Is The Civil Service Commission and What Does It Do For The City Of Long Beach?

The Civil Service Commission is not a department of the city, it is, as the name indicates, a Commission with appointed Commissioners and a staff that reports the Commissioners. Neither the staff nor the Commissioners actually do any of the hiring for the City of Long Beach. The Civil Service Commission:

- 1) Vets the qualifications of candidates who are applying for positions at the City of Long Beach that fall under the categorization of "Classified".

- a) The Civil Service is mandated to provide a list of qualified candidates to the City's own Human Resources Department within 90 days of a position being listed. This may mean:

- i) Administering Civil Service tests (Civil Service administers the test, it does not necessary produce the actual tests)
- ii) Vetting the education and/or certification and/or experience the candidates list on their applications

- 2) Turns over the list of qualified candidates to the City's Human Resources Department.

- a) Human Resources works with the individual department hiring managers to decide which of those qualified candidates will be interviewed and eventually hired.

- 3) Investigates complaints from city employees who think they are being treated illegally by the department in which they work.

- 4) Investigates complaints from residents who may wish to report waste, fraud, abuse or illegality by those employed by the City.

- 5) Admonishes the City to alter practices that may be against this or that law or code and may result in a lawsuit against the City

How Did Long Beach Get A Civil Service Commission?

The Long Beach Civil Service Commission was started at the end of the last century when many municipalities were starting such commissions. President James Garfield was shot by Charles Guiteau at the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C on July 2, 1881. Guiteau had given money to Garfield's campaign and in return expected an appointment in Garfield's administration. When none was forthcoming Guiteau felt robbed and shot Garfield

in retaliation. Guiteua's feeling of entitlement was not unfounded. Patronage and spoils in local, county, state and the federal government were rampant. The attempt on President Garfield's life shocked the nation and spurred a wave of reform to get grift and the spoils system out of government and put the "service" back in Civil Service. The City of Long Beach got in on this wave. Long Beach established the Civil Service Commission to purposely be independent of the machinations of City government officials.

Implications of Measure JB

The Bad Old Days Before The Civil Service Commission

But historically, the City of Long Beach did not ride that wave all the way to the shore. One of the people who educated me about this was former Long Beach Unified School District Board President Felton Williams. Long before serving on the LBUSD Board, Williams was the president of the San Pedro NAACP chapter and then the LA

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regional NAACP and then the NAACP for the Western US. Equal opportunity in employment had been one of his chief goals during that time. Here Williams is talking about how things used to be in Long Beach before pushes by the Civil Rights struggle got the Civil Service Commission to straighten up and step up to its actual purpose of delivering a list of all the qualified candidates for a given position, including candidates of color and female candidates.



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YouTube Felton Williams On #CivilService As A Pathw...

Where Is The Real Slow Down In City Of Long Beach Hiring?

If the Civil Service Commission does not hire and is mandated to turn over lists of qualified candidates to the City's own Human Resources department within 90 days, what is taking the city so long to actually fill positions? Well, to hear Robyn Gordon-Peterson, the presiding member of the Civil Services Commissioner tell it (in quite a fiery way I might add), it's the machinations of the City of Long Beach's own officials that keep positions from being filled in a timely fashion. Listen below to what she has to say.



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YouTube #LongBeachCA Officials Stall On Hiring The...

In the case of the Long Beach Police Department, there are very specific issues, some of which are plaguing police departments nationwide, which make hiring very slow. But others of these issues fall squarely on the amount of resources LBPD and the City of Long Beach choose to dedicate to police recruitment. Herman Long, a former staff member of the Civil Service who dealt with police recruitment specifically, goes over those issues in a clear way in the video below.

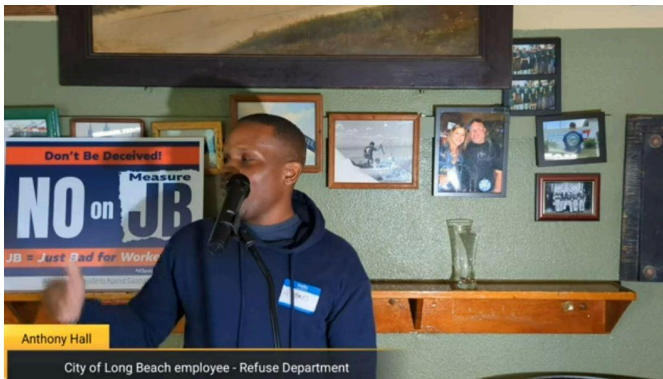


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Vote NO On Measure #JB - The REAL Reas...

Who Protects The Interests of Taxpayers And Who Protects City Workers If Civil Service Goes Away?

So what happens to the remaining employees when the open positions in their department remain unfilled? Let Anthony Hall from the City of Long Beach Refuse Department tell you. Hall is the first speaker after the intro in the video below. The last speaker, again Robyn Gordon-Peterson, explains the potentially dire implications of what happens to accountability of City employees/officials once the Civil Service Commission is gone.



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Vote NO on Long Beach's Measure JB - It's ...

I think that the Civil Service Commission plays an important role in keeping city hiring fair and impartial and outside the realm of cronyism. I also think the Civil Service Commission plays a role in keeping the City accountable to its employees and to its residents. I do think abolishing the Civil Service Commission would indeed speed up hiring in Long Beach, California. It would speed up the hiring of the cronies of people who are powerful in

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City government. That's not the Long Beach I want. And that is why I will be voting NO on Measure JB.



[Adreana Langston](#) has lived in Long Beach, California since she began attending sixth grade at LongFellow Elementary School. She currently resides in Downtown Long Beach with her

partner Michael of over 30 years and is a member of the Board of Social Justice at the First Congregational Church Of Long Beach United Church of Christ.