

"Federation Corner" column
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Ike Leggett strongly supports smaller County Council Districts

by Charles Wolff
MCCF Historian

On May 18th, Former County Council president and current State Democratic Party Chair, Isiah Leggett, lent his considerable prestige to the general merits of our efforts to restructure the County Council when he addressed the issues committee of our county's Democratic Central Committee. He favors creating a "minimum of eight council districts" plus several At Large seats for a total of 11 council members. He vigorously urged his party representatives to move toward smaller districts, which would serve the interests of "good government" and diversity.

Ike Leggett stressed that in the 1980s when he, Bruce Adams, and civic leaders managed to change Council elections from all At Large to the current five districts plus four At Large members, it was never meant to be the final reform. As the population grows, it is necessary to adjust district size accordingly.

Unfortunately, Leggett's farsighted advice for further change was not heeded. The Democratic Party leaders and the County Council will do nothing on this unless forced. The above-mentioned issues committee avoided an opportunity for leadership and voted to take the cowardly stand of waiting to see if the civic people can gather 10,000 valid signatures to petition the issue to the November ballot.

As you know, the Civic Fed is collecting signatures on petitions to restructure the County Council into nine single member, community-based districts. By cutting the size of existing districts almost in half, a grass roots candidate will have an easier time getting known throughout a district and competing against a well financed opponent. This would reduce the importance of special interest money in the outcome of County elections.

MCCF president, Cary Lamari and others have found many groups that agree with our goal and are out gathering signatures. Thousands have been mailed in to the Civic Fed. But we know of several thousand more that are laying on people's desks.

Please send in most of those signatures that you have already gathered so that we know more precisely how we're doing. But don't stop collecting. A full court press will still be needed in June and early July to get us over the top. Blank petition forms are available from Dale Tibbitts (301- 587-9358) and Charles Wolff (301- 585-9744).

Remember, neither our proposal nor Leggett's will happen unless we force action by showing 10,000 valid signatures by mid summer.