

Bringing Council Districts to Huntington

The Concerned Citizens of
Huntington

www.concernedcitizensofhuntington.com

Vote Yes for Council Districts December 22, 2009

- **Better Representation:** Currently our 4 Town Council members represent the whole Town, but no one is responsible for representing your community. With Council Districts, you will have a Town Council member from your community representing you and your community. You will have a Council Member attending school board meetings and community events all the time, not just Election years.
- **More Accountability:** With Council Districts, you will have a Council Member who answers to you. You will know who to call with a question. That person's job will depend on how well he or she represents your community. Under the current system, a Council Member can ignore whole sections of Town and still be re-elected.
- **More Openness:** So far in 2009, 100 percent of the Town Council's 598 votes have been unanimous. The 100 percent unanimous votes do not reflect our diverse communities and interests. Town Council Districts will ensure that every community has a say at Town Hall. With Council Districts, we will have more public input, more debate and decisions that reflect all our communities.
- **Takes the Big Money Out of Town Politics:** Town Council members raise over \$220,000 in each election cycle. That is legal and necessary, but they rely on politically connected big donors while challengers and "citizen legislators" cannot raise those funds. With Town Council Districts, community ties matter more than money. With Town Council Districts, candidates will win based on what they do for your community.
- **No New Costs:** No new layers, no new staff and no new costs. Four towns on Long Island have made the switch and none of have raised costs because of Council Districts.

It is what we do at every other level of government & in the rest of America

"Huntington is a modern, cosmopolitan town in many ways. It's time its form of government reflected that." *Newsday* editorial October 20, 2009.

Want to help?

Send an email to info@concernedcitizensofhuntington.com or call 631-425-9217.

Visit our web site: www.ConcernedCitizensofHuntington.com

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At every other level of government we rely on election districts. That is the American form of government; don't we want the same representation here in Huntington?

The Town Council is a legislative body. All legislators need to balance the needs and interests of their constituents with the needs and interest of the greater good, in this case the Town. Only the current at-large system is out of whack because our Town Council members do not represent and are not accountable to any communities. By creating Council Districts we will create a balance and ensure that the Town Council considers the interests of our individual communities in all decisions.

The State established the current Town government structure in the 1920s when Huntington had fewer than 30,000 people. Today, Huntington has more than 200,000 residents, making it larger than Salt Lake City, Des Moines and Little Rock. Huntington has grown up, should our system of electing Town Council members grow up too?

A Few Questions and Answers

"I don't know where the District Lines will be drawn" or "Council Districts will split Communities." By law, the district lines will be drawn by the Town Board after the measure passes. All districts must be equal in population and must be "contiguous and compact." The lines must keep the Villages intact and should keep hamlets and communities intact. The Town Board will draw the lines in an open process that will allow input from citizens and communities. Drawing new lines is nothing new. We do it every ten years for all our elected positions, so drawing lines for the districts should not present a challenge.

"Today I can vote for four Council Members, but in a District System I can only vote for one": We think it is better to vote for one member who is directly accountable to your community than to vote for four members who may not come from or represent your community. This is what we do at every other level of government.

"Won't the districts pit one part of the Town against another?" There should be debate and discussion about the different interests and needs for our different communities. That's not chaos; that's democracy. Council Districts will make sure that all communities have a say. With the 100 percent unanimous voting of the Town Council, it appears that not all communities have input or representation at Town Hall.

"Council Districts will cost money." This is a scare tactic. Council Districts will not add new layers, new positions, new staff or new offices. Eleven towns in New York and four on Long Island have switched to Council Districts; none of them saw tax increases because of Council Districts. **None of those eleven towns have tried to switch back.** In Brookhaven, where rival parties rarely agree on anything, all parties agree that Council Districts are the better way to go.

"Three districts will gang up on one district." Another scare tactic. Can the at-large members of the Town Council "gang up" or ignore a district? Districts create more representation, not less. Four Towns on Long Island have made the switch to Council Districts and **not once** has it happened that districts ganged up on one district. Don't be afraid of making a change for the better.

"Are the Concerned Citizens of Huntington a Partisan Group?" We are a true non-partisan group. We have not endorsed or opposed any party, candidate or other political issue. We were not involved in the recent election races. Our members and supporters come from all parties and all parts of Town.