Montgomery County Council

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COUNCIL OKS ISSUES FOR NOVEMBER BALLOT

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The Montgomery County Council certified today proposed amendments to the County Charter to be decided by the voters in November.

Propositions petitioned by over 10,000 County voters would remove the ability of the Council to override the Charter's limit on property taxes with the support of seven out of nine Councilmembers and would limit Councilmembers and the County Executive to no more than three consecutive four-year terms.

The Council provisionally certified a third ballot measure to change the method of election of Councilmembers, conditioned on proponents' obtaining the required 10,000 valid signatures by August 9.

"Voters will decide critical issues that could profoundly affect our County's future in November," said Council President Steve Silverman.

Question A, the property tax limit petitioned to the ballot by perennial candidate Robin Ficker, would remove the flexibility contained in the County Charter which allows the amount of property taxes collected by the County to rise above the inflation-based Charter limit with the support of seven out of nine Councilmembers.

Question B, another Ficker initiative, would limit County Councilmembers and the County Executive to no more than three consecutive terms. A similar measure, which called for a two-term limit, was defeated by the voters four years ago.

Question C, currently being petitioned to the ballot by the Montgomery County Civic Federation, would require Councilmembers to run from nine single-member districts, replacing the current system of five single-member districts

combined with four Councilmembers elected at-large. Voters would be able to vote only for their district representative under the change, while they can now vote for five Councilmembers (their district representative, plus four at-large) under the status quo.

The ballot language approved by the Council is as follows:

Question A
Property Tax Limits

Eliminate the authority of the County Council, by an affirmative vote of 7 out of 9 Councilmembers, to levy a tax on real property that will produce revenue that exceeds the revenue limit set in Section 305 by amending Section 305 of the County Charter.

Question B
Term Limits- County Council and County Executive

Amend sections 105 and 202 of the County Charter to:
        --limit the County Executive and members of the County Council to 3 consecutive terms in office, and
        --provide that a County Executive and any member of the County Council who will have served 3 or more consecutive terms on December 4, 2006, cannot serve another successive term in the same office.

Question C
County Council—Election by District

Amend sections102, 103, and 104 of the County Charter to:
        --divide the County into 9, rather than the current 5, Council districts;
        --elect all Councilmembers by district, rather than the current 5 by district and 4 at large; and
        -- reduce from 5 to 1 the number of Councilmembers each voter can vote for.

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