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The year of charter reform

The decision by Norman Braman to devote his time, energy and resources to influencing the outcome of minority-majority district commission elections rather than securing lasting charter reform is unfortunate. He runs the risk of marring his legacy of civic activism. If his slate of candidates loses, and he misses the opportunity to effectuate true charter reform, it will only confirm speculation that he is fueled entirely by resentment over the Marlins Stadium deal.

The charter reforms presented at the public hearing by the appointed task force deserve his support. If approved by the county commission and the voters of Miami-Dade County, commissioners will serve a maximum of eight continuous years, receive the median income of the workforce as compensation for their service and be required to forfeit their office if they or a family member receives financial gain from any county contracts. Essentially, to qualify to be the mayor or a county commissioner, a candidate will have to be free of any business conflicts.

The task force also proposed a host of meritorious reforms. They dealt with mayoral conflicts in procurement actions; formulated a succession plan in the event a mayor is ever recalled (a true Braman legacy item); eliminated the notary and circulator signatures on petitions; suggested a statement of cause for recall be included on petitions; separated the sheriff powers from the office of strong mayor; embedded the 2/3 vote requirement for Urban Development Boundary changes in the charter; introduced the concept of an independent governing board for Jackson Hospital and adopted a process for incorporating new cities by petition. By any measure, that's a boatload of reform.

In order for these proposals to make it to the ballot and win approval by the voters, there's a need for an orchestrated community campaign.

This is the moment for someone with the resources and record of civic engagement like Braman to step up and make it happen. This is the year for Charter Reform.

Unfortunately, he has indicated that he plans to ignore meaningful reform and instead use his capital to influence elections in the districts.

Election Day, Aug. 14, happens to be the 20th anniversary of Judge Donald Graham's decision, which gave minority communities the right to select their own representatives on the county commission.

Allow the district electors to celebrate that day by electing the candidates of their own choice. Braman should leave a lasting legacy and focus his attention on Charter Reform.

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