
**The Final Recommendations
of the
Citizens Charter Review Committee
on the Dade County Charter**

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7. Meeting the future challenges of complex issues that will face Dade County into the 21st century will require the most effective political talent and leadership this county possesses. Therefore, we should enhance the political attractiveness of county political offices.
8. The current \$6,000 compensation for commissioners of \$6,000 established in 1957 is grossly inadequate in view of for the time required and the burdens of office. It creates a strong disincentive for incumbents to continue to serve as well as discouraging those who might consider seeking county office.

The Unincorporated Area

1. The population of Dade County has increased dramatically since the adoption of the Charter, from less than a million in 1957 to over 1.7 million in 1984.
2. Almost fifty percent of the residents of Dade County today reside outside the boundaries of any of the county's 27 municipalities.
3. More than seventy five percent of the county's population growth through the year 2005 is projected to occur in the unincorporated area.
4. Although the role of the municipalities in Dade County have been criticized in favor of the regional county government, they nevertheless perform important functions both in the delivery of services to their residents and as an entry level for the development of future political talent.
5. Residents of the municipalities have more options for political involvement in the county than residents of the unincorporated area, who have extremely limited avenues for political involvement.
6. The residents of the unincorporated area are a valuable resource of political talent which, due in part to the current

governmental structure, are effectively precluded from seeking political office. This is not a reasonable situation in the view of the size and demography of Dade County.

7. The residents of the unincorporated area should be given greater opportunities to affect county decisions which directly pertain to them.

Partisan Elections

1. The historical basis for non-partisan elections for local officeholders stems from the municipal reform movement of the early 20th century. Such elections were intended to curb the patronage system and to end corruption in local politics.
2. The patronage system was effectively replaced by the use of a system of civil service for local government employees and by the adoption of merit retention systems.
3. Adoption of a system of partisan elections for candidates for the office of the County Mayor and County Commissioner would not result in a government rife with patronage so long as the safeguard of a civil service system is in place.
4. Non-partisanship was not a significant issue in 1957 when Dade County effectively had only one party.
5. Identifying candidates by political party for the office of the County Mayor and County Commissioner would assist voter identification of both the candidates and the issues.
6. Identifying candidates by political party for the office of the County Mayor and County Commissioner would enhance the dynamics of county politics.
7. The Dade County School Board is elected in partisan elections. Education issues are certainly less partisan than county government issues.
8. The electorate should be given an opportunity to address the issue of partisanship in view of the changed circumstances in the county.

The Unincorporated Area

Citizens living in Dade's 27 cities have a primary level of government to which they can turn for the resolution of many local issues. The adoption of the Charter established a two-tier system of government, a federal system where municipalities legislate their own municipal affairs subject to the authority of the county government to legislate on county wide issues. Voters in the municipalities also cast votes for members of the County Commissioners and, at least for them, the promise of a federal system has been kept. However, little attention was given in the Charter to the unincorporated area.

The County Commission serves as the "city council" for this "non-city," providing municipal-type services and exercising zoning authority. The County Commission is given the exclusive authority to create new municipalities in the unincorporated area but has historically opposed such action. Since the adoption of the charter in 1957, only the municipality of Islandia has been incorporated. While some critics might argue that there are presently too many cities in Dade County, the Committee has found that the number of cities is within normal ranges for communities of this size and that Dade actually has fewer units of government than most.

The Committee recommends that the County Commission which is reconstituted under the Committee's recommendations seriously consider the creation of new municipalities in the unincorporated area.

The creation of more cities in the unincorporated area would create a primary level of government for those citizens living beyond the borders of Dade's 27 municipalities. The residents of these new municipalities would have greater access to their elected officials and their government on issues of local concern such as police protection, parks and recreation, and zoning. The elected officials of these new cities would also be directly accountable to their constituents for the successes and failures of their governments.

The creation of new municipalities would also benefit Dade County as a whole of relieving the Commission from the burden of acting as the city council for the unincorporated area. It could devote its time exclusively to confronting and finding solutions for the problems which face the county itself rather than its subparts.

The County Commission is urged to explore all the different local government alternatives for these new municipalities. One possibility is to

constitute them as "contract cities", municipalities that would have an elected leadership but no bureaucracy of its own. The new cities could be precluded from providing any service currently rendered by the Metro Dade government to its residents. The new cities would have a tax base of their own and could draw upon it to purchase a higher level of services.

The advantage of using the contract cities models is that it allows these new cities a measure of local control, especially over land use, but avoids the necessity of expending large sums to recruit a corp of city employees and of large capital investments for facilities like police and fire stations. The contract cities approach is widely, and successfully, used in the Los Angeles area.

The contract cities technique contributes to greater governmental efficiency and lowers costs because it eliminates the necessity for each local government to establish and maintain its own bureaucracy. If properly utilized, the contract cities approach could be an economical solution to providing a primary level of government to the residents of the unincorporated area.