

Dear all,

I'd like to address the issue of billboards for a moment - something that has citywide implications yet has, unfortunately, been mischaracterized by many.

Recently, a judge on California's 2nd District Court of Appeal signaled the court's tentative intention to revoke permits for about 100 existing digital signs throughout Los Angeles. That is great news for many L.A. communities that have been severely impacted by digital signs. If this ruling is finalized by the Court, it will be a big step toward the City's goal of reducing the number of billboards citywide. It will not, however, be the end of the L.A. billboard wars – not even close.

Especially in light of this tentative ruling, now is exactly the time to press forward and adopt a comprehensive legislative solution to control and reduce all outdoor advertising. The motion that Councilmember Ed Reyes and I introduced in late October begins the analysis and public dialogue necessary to achieve three important policy goals that I believe the City must pursue: A significant reduction in the number of billboards of all kinds, revenues to mitigate blight and otherwise assist communities that have suffered impacts, and a final resolution, once and for all, of this seemingly endless battle over past failures in policy making and bad deals. These three goals are the entire purpose of our motion, and they are expressly stated in it.

I invite everybody to read the actual motion, which is available here:

http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2012/12-1611_ca_10-16-12.pdf . In it, you can see that the motion calls for the beginning of a discussion about the options available to the Council and that any legislative solutions must be considered in public by the Budget and Finance Committee, the Planning and Land Use Management Committee and the Neighborhood Councils before the City Council acts.

The motion will not result in an agreement to allow billboard companies to “expand their inventory of digital billboards,” and in fact it expressly states an intention to do the opposite.

Finally, I want to let everyone know that regardless of whatever early input or suggestions on this subject some stakeholders may have offered to other people, I am the person responsible for the actual motion that was in fact introduced and passed by the Council. Period. Implications to the contrary are simply false.

The status of the ongoing litigation over digital billboards offers the city a tremendous opportunity to take control of this issue and determine our own destiny in the best interests of all Angelenos. If we can stop demonizing and start thinking, we can substantially reduce billboard blight in all parts of the City. We can determine whether any digital billboards are appropriate anywhere, and if so, we can regulate them and reduce their impact on communities. We can identify and secure funding to address the urgent needs of neighborhoods across Los Angeles. But we can't achieve any of this if our city has so succumbed to extremism that even discussing ideas becomes a basis for contempt.

I was not elected to do only what was popular, nor to be swayed by the loudest screeching voice. I was elected to help steer our city through a time of great crisis and challenge and to build a foundation for a much better future. Developing straightforward solutions to the billboard problems that have vexed us for years is a part of that mission, and I will continue to work hard to achieve them in the most inclusive and open manner possible.

Thank you,
Paul