

Solutions, not Soundbytes.



Government by the people: Letting all our voices be heard

Noel Freeman's plan to bring a stronger voice to Houstonians on the legislative agenda

Houston has a unique system of government. We have the strongest "strong mayor" system of any major city in the United States because our mayor has absolute control over the legislative agenda. Our City Council members are the direct voice of our citizens in government and without the ability to add items to the agenda, Houstonians are not truly represented in how we govern and regulate our City.

★ Let City Council Introduce Legislation

As a member of City Council, I will work hard to get City Council members the ability to add items to the legislative agenda, provided the item is introduced with the consent of at least five district Council members and three at-large Council members.

"As Houston's next at-large Council member in Position 4, I will work hard to give City Council the ability to add items to the legislative agenda."

- NOEL FREEMAN

★ Direct Representation in Public Policy

Citizens view their City Council members as their direct representative in government more so than they do the mayor. In a strong mayor system, many citizens in the political minority and in struggling communities do not feel encouraged to engage in strong participation in government due to a lack of influence in the agenda and often find themselves left out when it comes to legislation that directly benefits their communities and needs.

★ Efficient and Representative Government

What Houston's strong mayor system makes up for in efficiency, it lacks in being truly representative of the needs and desires of Houstonians at the Council district level. While the mayor must typically engage in political brokering to have the support needed to pass an item before it is placed on the agenda, the reality is that all 15 members of City Council, representing every single Houstonian, could want an item placed on the agenda, but they are unable to introduce it directly.

By giving Council the ability to add items to the agenda, it will bring a new level of coalition building to City Hall and will allow those Houstonians who have not been able to have a voice at the Council table to be heard, serving the greater ideals of democracy. With the mayor serving as chief executive over the administrative and bureaucratic functions of the City, we can still maintain the level of efficiency enjoyed under our current strong mayor system.