

UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

Instant betrayal

Prop. 99 forces quickly break word on reform

June 5, 2008

Proposition 99's decisive victory – and the closer defeat of Proposition 98, a rival measure dealing with eminent domain that was also flawed – had local government officials popping champagne corks around California. But no others should be happy – unless they share local officials' worship of the eminent domain status quo.

Contrary to its TV ads, Proposition 99's restrictions on eminent domain – the name for the process by which public agencies seize private property, while compensating the owners, for projects with a “public purpose” – are toothless and loaded with loopholes. This is why the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office said it would have no practical effect.

This means that homeowners and small businesses will continue to be vulnerable in cities where well-connected developers have local politicians do their bidding. The same rules that allowed officials to target a popular boxing club in National City, churches in Cypress and Long Beach, a thriving neighborhood in Garden Grove, and prosperous small firms around the state remain. This is just what Proposition 99's main sponsor – the League of California Cities – wanted.

In a January interview with the Union-Tribune Editorial Board, the San Diego politician who is currently president of the cities league – City Councilman Jim Madaffer – took sharp exception to questions about the league's sincerity. He acknowledged concerns that Proposition 99 wouldn't necessarily prevent local government misbehavior and said that is why the league is interested in additional reforms. Other supporters later made similar promises.

Yesterday, however, Madaffer told us the league was not interested in additional reforms, that the voters had spoken, and that “any further restrictions should be left to individual cities.”

This is shameless and dishonest. But for the League of California Cities, it is par for the course.

[»Next Story»](#)

Find this article at:

http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20080605/news_lz1ed5middle.html

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.