

Good Evening Board Members:

Before I get immersed into the business at hand I would like to thank each of you for your service on this Board and the sacrifice of your personal time. Thank you.

My name is Terry Flott and I am here this evening as the Chair of United Citizens' Action Network – or more fondly referred to as U-CAN. We are an all volunteer, countywide, grassroots, citizen advocacy group whose main focus is transparency and accountability in government and controlled growth. We came together as individuals who discovered that our government leaders were not necessarily doing what was best for all but rather what was and is more politically expedient and as a result decided that in order to make any impact we can no longer do it on an community by community or individual basis and decided to take a county-wide approach.

Board members, our County is at a political crossroad. We have been plagued with scandals of some sort, one after the other, year after year and it seems to be escalating in more recent years – brewing to a perfect storm; though, it could be as simple as groups like U-CAN and other activists or should I say citizen advocates that are exposing wrong doing and insisting on transparency and broad participation in our government. Whatever the reason, citizen distrust, resentment and cynicism about partisanship at the local level are at an all time high and business as usual is not longer acceptable.

Sadly, this sentiment is not peculiar to Hillsborough County. Voter registration numbers across the country are changing and more and more folks are registering with No Party Affiliation (NPA). If you will note, I have provided two documents that reflect voter registration figures from both the State Division of Elections and Hillsborough County's Supervisor of Elections website. The State's website provided an historical overview and the local SOE's office showed registered voters by party. The State's chart demonstrates a significant and steady pattern that more and more folks are not partaking in the two party system or business as usual. Those numbers show that 22.5% of voters in the State are in the "other" category and to clarify the "other" category encompasses anything other than Republican or Democrat. The Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections office indicates that Hillsborough County's other party affiliation numbers are slightly ahead of the State figures at 24%. Based on my research, the increasing numbers of other party affiliation is a national trend. As a result Counties and even States are modifying their laws to give voters a real say at the voting booth via non-partisan seats and/or open primaries.

It is obvious that a large number of voters are being disenfranchised at **primaries**. This doesn't take into account the numbers of registered R's and D's that, openly or secretly, would like to have the opportunity to vote for someone other than candidates of their party in the primary. We know this because we hear it over and over again right here in Hillsborough County. They want the freedom of choice beginning at the primaries **not after choices have been whittled down by others**.

Members of the BOCC have informed us that things have changed and we have to do things differently than we have in the past. Well, we agree with that thought process and we believe we must do things differently beginning at the top. We believe that removing the letters next to BOCC candidates' names can go a long way toward giving control back to the electorate. Thus, U-CAN strongly believes that our local county commission seats should **not** be partisan positions. So you may ask.....

Board Members, we have some very real challenges ahead in Hillsborough County and at the very least we hope we can provoke a healthy dialogue on this Board and with the public at-large.

U-CAN believes **this Charter Review Board** has the potential to make some changes - meaningful changes - in the direction our County will take in providing an all inclusive process and in doing so, **just perhaps, a little history.**

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address this Board and I look forward discussion on this topic.

WHY NON-PARTISAN?

Issues with current partisan system:

- Disenfranchisement of a growing number of individual/voters.
- Voters are tiring of the party line bickering and bad behavior.
- Voters at the local level should be able to vote for the candidate of their choice regardless of party.
- Partisan politics often determines (early on) who we will be able to vote for, for example:
 - Manipulation of ballots via last minute "buy-ins" or "write in's" forcing opposition into primary a run off that would not otherwise have been required. I call them "ringers" for lack of a better word.
 - Partisan wheeling and dealing and the incessant game of musical seats.
 - And more!
- Parties limit fair competition, especially when the candidate is the incumbent.
- Increasing dissatisfaction with the two major political parties. There's not much room for moderates in the Republican party and not much room for conservatives in the Democratic party.

Non-Partisan system would:

- Open up the race and removes the monopoly power from the entrenched political machines.
- Allow registered voters – including independents and other third party voters - to be **enfranchised** in **every election**, significantly expanding the electorate.
- Increase competition in elections.
- Provide broader participation and better representation by candidates.
- Increase voter participation in the selection and election of viable County Commission candidates to provide more responsive candidates and a more involved electorate.
- Eliminate the controversial "pick a party" primary and give **ALL** voters the freedom of choice.
- Remove the partisan lens which often puts pressure on elected officials to move to extremes on issues to respond to the most active voices in their party base rather than work toward the middle in seeking solutions to problems.
- Reduce election costs depending on the type of non-partisan system that is chosen – 51% names winner in primary or top two vote getters move to general election.
- Foster better relationships with local municipal governments since Commissioners would not be beholden to the "party line" or party bosses.
- Eliminating the party primaries, non-partisan elections would create a more diverse public debate.
- Level the playing field.

Obviously, this list is not meant to be an exhaustive representation of the benefits of BOCC members being non-partisan positions.

In addition to the non-partisan consideration there are several other points of concern that U-CAN would like to point out that are directly related to the BOCC and hope you will take them under consideration as well...after all, this is what the Charter Review Board has been established for. We should be as thorough as possible to make any and all changes that could better serve the citizens of Hillsborough County.

Please take under consideration the following issues:

Establish true term limits

- No more jumping from one seat to another, serving another 8 or more years in each seat – racking up years, some up to 18 years!
- Under no circumstance should a seated Commissioner run for another seat on the BOCC before his/her obligation in the current seat has been fulfilled.
- We further suggest that you strongly urge the BOCC to develop a policy (separate from the charter). Aides wishing to run for a political office must resign or take an unpaid leave of absence to do so. All other county employees are required to do so and this should be applicable to Commissioners aides and/or Legislative Assistants as well.

Campaign Financing

- Reduce the maximum allowable campaign contribution to \$250. Contributions and campaign coffers are out of control. Frankly, some amounts we are seeing are obscene in the hundreds of thousands. It is out of control; elections at the County level should not require the ridiculous amounts we are seeing today.

Ethics Code

- Establish a strong Code of Ethics for the BOCC to include ramifications of non compliance.

BOCC Salaries

- Clarify the circumstances under which BOCC salaries are set and establish guidelines on how they can be lowered. It is our understanding that Hillsborough County being a Charter County may be able to establish how salaries are set and lowered and under what conditions.

While we are not suggesting that this should occur we do believe that it must be clarified and enumerated should the need arise.

BOCC Job Description

- Revise job description in the Charter to indicate that Board Members are required to conduct both written and verbal performance evaluations on all direct reports on an annual basis.

It is beyond absurd that Board members can opt out of this duty. Doing so is a dereliction of duty and responsibility to the citizens of Hillsborough County. Not to mention an important mechanism by which to document and counsel those reporting to them AND a means by which the voters can assess the Board Members' performances.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY VOTER STATISTICS*

Last Updated: Aug 14, 2010

Party	Voters	Percent
Democratic Party	283,837	42.46%
Republican Party	223,468	33.43%
Other	161,211	24.11%
TOTAL	668,516	100.00%
No Party Affiliation	129,507	19.37%
Independent Party	16,907	2.53%
No Party Selected	8,727	1.31%
Independence Party	3,469	0.52%
Libertarian Party	1,209	0.18%
Green Party	464	0.07%
Independent Democrats	356	0.05%
Reform Party	183	0.03%
Veterans Party of America	63	0.01%
Socialist Party of Florida	58	0.01%
Constitution Party	42	0.01%
America's Independent Party of Florida	27	0.00%
Christian Party	25	0.00%
Surfers Party of America	23	0.00%
Florida Socialist Workers Party	21	0.00%
Moderate Party	20	0.00%
Faith & Patience Inc.	16	0.00%
Family Values Party	14	0.00%
America First Party	13	0.00%
Tea Party	12	0.00%
American Reform Party	11	0.00%
Florida Whig Party	10	0.00%
American Party of Florida	6	0.00%
Progressive Libertarian Party	6	0.00%
Unity08	6	0.00%
Possibility Party	5	0.00%
Ecology Party of Florida	4	0.00%
Real Food Party of the United States of America	3	0.00%
Prohibition Party	1	0.00%
Term Limits for the United States Congress Party	1	0.00%
Objectivist Party of Florida	1	0.00%
Party for Socialism and Liberation - Florida	1	0.00%
No Political Affiliation Party	0	0.00%
Sovereign American Party	0	0.00%
Florida Conservative	0	0.00%
Independent Justice Party	0	0.00%
American Poor People Party	0	0.00%
1st United + Independent Party of Florida	0	0.00%
Boston Tea Party of Florida	0	0.00%
British Reformed Sectarian Party	0	0.00%
TOTAL OTHER	161,211	

158,610
23%

* statistics from Hillsborough County SOE website

FLORIDA DIVISION OF ELECTIONS

AS OF MAY 2010

YEAR	REPUBLICAN		DEMOCRATS		OTHERS		TOTAL
72	984,999	28%	2,394,604	68%	117,855	3%	3,497,458
74	1,035,510	29%	2,438,580	67%	147,166	4%	3,621,256
76	1,138,751	28%	2,750,723	67%	204,834	5%	4,094,308
78	1,178,671	28%	2,812,217	67%	226,299	5%	4,217,187
80	1,429,645	30%	3,087,427	64%	292,649	6%	4,809,721
82	1,500,031	31%	3,066,351	63%	299,254	6%	4,865,636
84	1,895,937	34%	3,313,073	59%	365,462	7%	5,574,472
86	2,038,831	36%	3,214,753	57%	377,604	7%	5,631,188
88	2,360,434	39%	3,264,105	54%	422,808	7%	6,047,347
90	2,448,488	41%	3,149,847	52%	432,926	7%	6,031,261
92	2,672,968	41%	3,318,565	51%	550,292	8%	6,541,825
94	2,747,074	42%	3,245,518	49%	567,006	9%	6,559,598
96	3,317,501	41%	3,740,351	46%	1,050,419	13%	8,108,271
98	3,292,589	40%	3,691,742	45%	1,235,935	15%	8,220,266
2000	3,474,438	39%	3,853,524	43%	1,552,434	17%	8,880,396
2002	3,610,992	39%	3,956,694	42%	1,756,873	19%	9,324,559
2003	3,577,179	39%	3,880,342	42%	1,808,963	20%	9,266,484
2004	3,954,492	38%	4,322,376	41%	2,199,569	21%	10,476,437
2005	3,954,304	38%	4,276,512	41%	2,241,102	21%	10,471,918
2006	3,920,201	38%	4,196,608	40%	2,268,797	22%	10,385,606
2007	3,826,836	37%	4,138,604	41%	2,241,161	22%	10,206,601
2008	4,106,743	36%	4,800,890	42%	2,504,290	22%	11,411,923
2009	3,967,472	36%	4,637,354	42%	2,559,541	23%	11,164,367
Thru May '10	3,981,770	35.9%	4,612,154	41.6%	2,491,935	22.5%	11,085,859