

Dear Member of the Los Angeles World Affairs Council,

I am writing to you to endorse the proposed merger of the Los Angeles World Affairs Council and Town Hall and to recommend that you vote in favor of this merger.

As many of you know, I was President of the Council for six years, from July 2012 until August 2018, when I left to take up a new post at the American Academy in Berlin. But for some time before I left I was involved in the original talks about a potential merger with Town Hall, and then I got into a series of very detailed negotiations with my then counterpart at Town Hall, Kim McCleary. We both thought that our two organizations would be stronger together, able to attract a greater range of speakers, and be financially more secure. Together we produced a detailed blueprint for a potential merger that was then submitted to both of our boards for their input and suggestions. In the middle of that process I was offered the job in Berlin, and although I was excited about the merger in LA, I decided to take the Berlin opportunity. That notwithstanding, I still believe strongly that this is a good move for LAWAC.

Many of you will recall that just before I joined LAWAC, there had been a very contentious and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to join LAWAC and the Pacific Council. The biggest obstacle at the time was a perception among many LAWAC members that they would lose some membership benefits and that their access to some programming would be reduced in the joint organization. I can understand the objections from that time.

I am confident that the currently proposed merger with Town Hall will not dilute anyone's membership benefits. On the contrary the range of programming will increase. LAWAC is the larger of the two organizations, and so the proposal is for Town Hall members to be absorbed into the LAWAC membership structure and for Town Hall board members to become board members of LAWAC. In addition the Town Hall staff will move into the LAWAC offices in Culver City.

I see this merger as a win-win situation, and heartily recommend you vote in favor. I remain in touch with the LAWAC staff and board members. I was very proud of all we achieved together when I was there, and so I feel personally invested in the continued success of LAWAC as it plans this merger with Town Hall. I have also stayed in touch with Kim McCleary, and I am sure she will be a good leader for the newly joined organization.

Yours sincerely,

Terry