Understanding the Neighborhood Legislature (NL) – Terms and Arguments

**The Plan**

Each current Assembly districts / Senate district is subdivided into 100 Neighborhood Assembly Districts = 5,000 voters (2 or 3 precincts) and 100 Neighborhood Senate districts = 10,000 voters (5 precincts).

The 100 Neighborhood Assemblymen and 100 Neighborhood Senators in each large Assembly or Senate district meet in convention to elect a Working Committee (WC) member (Assembly or Senate). Therefore, only 80 Assembly WC members and 40 Senate WC members go to Sacramento out of the 12,000 Neighborhood Representatives (NRs). However, all 12,000 NR vote on every piece of legislation.

**Benefits of the Neighborhood Legislature (NL)**

1. **No More Big Spending** **Political Campaigns** – special interest groups and Super PACs’ spending become ineffective and marginalize as campaigns are highly localized.
2. **Personalize/Localize Campaigning –** campaigns in Neighborhood Districts (NDs) will be face-to-face, door-to-door, winning the support and trust of one voter at a time, hence low cost to run office.
3. **Voter Integrity-** NRs and constituents establish and build a trustworthy and honest rapport, since NRs having direct knowledge and concerns voters in their districts care about.
4. **NRs Vote on Policy, Not for Special Interest –** NRsvote based on good policy not because special interest is funding their campaign  result is **fewer bills** will be introduced, since many now are funded by special interests looking for favors from Sacramento.
5. **Empowering Minority Voters -** outreach will go beyond pandering with benefits to providing opportunity to share power, have a seat at the legislative table, and influence and shape policy.

**Debunking Opposition Arguments**

1. *Creating more politicians – 12,000 total.* Response: NRs earn $1,000 a year and work out of home.
2. *Unworkable to have 12,000 legislatures.* Response: WC is the same size as today’s legislature and will delegate its authority to its subcommittees, just as today’s legislature does.
3. *Constituents lose representation since they don’t vote directly for WC members.* Response: Today’s legislature delegates its lawmaking authority to subcommittees; the NL is merely the 12,000 members delegating its authority to the WC, but NRs retain the ultimate up and down vote on legislation.
4. *Special interests can overwhelm NDs with workers and spend huge amounts of money to overwhelm candidates.* Response: This is continuative as candidates can go door-to-door and make their own persuasive arguments. In New Hampshire with tiny districts, candidates, who spend egregiously, are perceived as overly ambitious or corrupt in their motives and are usually defeated by candidates spending almost no money.
5. *Who will do this job – won’t we get legislators with axes to grind or bad motives?* Response: In a state of 38 million, we should be able to find 12,000 interested citizens (retired, part-time homemakers, college students, small businesspersons, etc) who feel a civic duty, particularly since it doesn’t require much campaigning and almost no fundraising.
6. *This has never been done before – we don’t know how it will work.* Response: It is a fundamental change but one that removes corruptive influence of special interest money and enhances voter contact and trust. Modeled after New Hampshire with tiny districts for over 100 years, little money is spent on legislative races, legislators are not susceptible to special interests.
7. *Constituents lose service because of staff cuts and reduced power of legislators.* Response: Instead of small number of district offices staffed by interns in a huge district, constituents will have access to a NR they know and have a personal relationship with. WC members will be more responsive to the 99 NRs they need to get re-elected. Executive branch will be responsive as each of 12,000 has a vote; the executive branch will need these votes for its legislative agenda.