

## Why our answer to the Better Together Constitutional Amendment Proposal is “NO”!

To whom it may concern:

I ask that you vote No, on a Constitutional Amendment for November 2020, proposed by Better Together (a non-profit group, sponsored by Billionaire Rex Sinquefeld, whose members for the most part, **are not from the St Louis Area**). As I understand it....and,

Taking out the emotional factors of this proposal, i.e.: said fragmentation being the cause of St Louis City's **failed Economic Development**, it's **Crime/Murder** rate, it's **failing Infrastructure**, the fact that **40% of their land is not taxable** cause its tied to nontaxable entities like hospitals, colleges, government buildings, charities, shelters, schools. Their continuous dropping Bond Ratings. The fact that their leadership has given away much of their remaining tax opportunities through TIF's (**the City of St Louis has just over 150 Tiff's within its boundaries**). The Cities inability to pick up trash consistently and policies of putting leaves in the streets that led to cars catching fire.

**The fact that our County Executive is under a Federal Microscope.**

**Let's look at the proposal for what it says/means itself.**

The proposal eliminates the entire Article 6, Sections 30-32, and replaces it. Which means the method devised by our ancestors - the Board of Freeholders, (which is meant to solve/merge these types of issues) will be eliminated from the Mo. Constitution and could never be used again.

The document states that the **Metro City's 1<sup>st</sup> Mayor** will be the individual that was in the St Louis County Executive position on **January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021**. i.e.: still Stenger.

The Metro City style of government relies heavily on the Mayor having all the executive and administrative powers. The **Mayor gets to appoint**: The Metro City Lawyer, and **4 Deputy Mayors** that will **never be elected** into office.

Let's talk about this St Louis Municipal District. This district is made up of the old entire City of St Louis. It is governed by a new 5-person board that is again **Unelected but Appointed** by the Transition Mayor i.e. Krewson. With ANY of its successors being Not Elected but **Appointed** there after by the Metro Mayor i.e.: Stenger.

**These 5 people will hold office until the Metro Mayor decides to replace them.**

Now the Metro Council represents 33 "Municipal Districts" these districts are made up of St Louis County Unincorporated and the 88 Municipalities. Stenger and Krewson get to pick which College/Colleges will decide the borders of these Municipal Districts. These borders should respect municipal boundaries "**when practicable**." However, this is harder to do than one would think.

In the Amendments genius use of language it guarantees that the Charter created by (Stenger and Krewson) goes into effect unless it is rejected by a 2/3 vote of the 33-person Council. 2/3<sup>rd</sup>'s in nearly impossible to attain.

Once these districts are designed, the **Council member has the authority to merge the municipalities** within his/her district, "as their financial obligations diminish".

Better Together touted that the municipalities would get to stay and run Parks, Admin and Planning and Zoning. However, the **33-person council gets final say over Zoning Matters**-which means if they want to build a 12-story building right next to your home, they could override us and do just that and in many areas throughout the Amendment, it states "**until the Metro City can provide**". This indicates that once the Metro City is capable of providing these services, the District Councilmember will merge all the municipalities within, thus **eliminating them**.

The "Metro City Government" will be located within the borders of the old City of St Louis. Bringing new employees to the Earnings Tax pool.

The 1% Earnings Tax will be used to pay off the **City of St Louis's, \$2+ Billion debts**. It is to be eliminated over a 10-year period, and new employees to the Metro City will get an end of year tax credit. With the City of St Louis having a **1.115 Billion-dollar** operating budget, where will the money come from to run the **day to day services** of the City? The amendment allows for the Metro City to pay for the Services of the St Louis Municipal District, **which means you and I will be paying for St Louis City Services**, as they are confiscating Municipal Sales Taxes.

In order to make this work the Amendment **CONFISCATES the Sales Taxes** etc. of the County and its Municipalities and leaves the Municipalities with ONLY its Property Taxes and Utility taxes to Pay for its Parks and Administration duties as well as any remaining financial obligations, **including Pensions for its remaining employees as well as the employees that the Metro City Confiscated** to become their employees or terminated because they did not need them.

**Pension issues present several questions ALL their own.**

**If the above is not enough, let's look at another objective of the Amendment.**

The Amendment **Terminates all Municipal Police Departments** and merges them into One Metro City Police Department. It ensures that **NONE** of the Municipal Chiefs or Assistant Chiefs has an opportunity to be a leader in the new Metro City Police Department and again determines that the **Metro City Mayor Stenger gets to choose the Chief of Police**.

Interestingly enough in the Amendments 2<sup>nd</sup> Version it deems that the **old City of St Louis's Collective Bargaining Agreements become that of the new Metro City**, this indeed opens many questions.....

The Amendment **CONFISCATES** all Muni Equipment, Buildings, Employees, Trucks, Cars, etc. leaving us with **only our Parks Facilities/Equipment and Employees**.

In the 70's and 80's Municipalities typically incorporated because they were not happy with the level of services offered by St Louis County. This is especially true of Police Services and Street Department Services, both of which the Amendment is **Confiscating** from the Municipalities Authority.

**Not to deter from the valued services** of St Louis County's Employees but there is a point when departments get too big and cannot equally service all.

Most municipalities can supply their communities with "Community Policing-(officers know most of us and our needs)", 2-minute service times, Dare Programs, SRO's, Neighborhood Watch Programs, officers at all community events, etc., etc.

The average service times prior to incorporation were 10-20 minutes. This was felt to be **too long** by those who incorporated and most of us today.

Our **street departments** perform various duties-yard waste, tree trimming, street cleaning, sidewalk repairs, grass cutting, Street Repairs.

How efficiently will all of these services be done, we can already see how "efficiently" the City of St Louis and the County have taken care of these...

But most importantly during the Winter Months Plow our Residential streets.

**St Louis City does NOT plow their residential streets**, which leaves their residents unable to get off their streets to even go to work in a large snowfall, till it melts.

**So, one has to ask, "How does an Ambulance, Firetruck or Officer get to these residents in an Emergency?"**

The governing structure of this amendment will **virtually eliminate 30%+ of the Minority Leadership in St Louis City and County**, setting back advances that took decades to reach in this area.

Presumably one of the reasons for this Amendment is to create **Equity for all** areas of St. Louis. Yet we need only to look to the very examples they shove at us: Louisville, Indianapolis, Nashville to see that equity for all has not been accomplished. In BT's meeting on 3/20/19, Marius Johnson verified that Municipal Districts would be able to levy **additional taxes to get better services-** (inclusive of police and streets) **so what about that Equity for all Claim???**

The new Metro City **promised jobs to all current St Louis City and St Louis County Employees**. Yet we see on page 6 that divisions, departments, boards, commissions etc. **will be cut...**

They state we will **save 50% of our Property Taxes** yet this is only the "General St Louis County PPT" so a home worth \$100,000 would approximately have a **savings of only \$58.00.**

**Their financials were based on 2017 numbers**, but legislation handed down after that year has affected budgets, and they failed to account for that in their numbers in totality.

### **Most Importantly!**

Our most basic **rights as citizens** of these United States of America **are to vote in Elections for public officials**. This amendment puts city residents in the position of being governed by a County leader they did not Elect and County residents in the position of being governed by a City leader they did not Elect and **won't get to Elect until November 2022**. It Effectively Cancels the Mayors Election in the City of St Louis which was due to be held in April of 2021. And this Amendment further waters down our voices by allowing the entire state of Missouri to vote in it – there by giving **the entire state of Missouri authority over how we are governed** and the rules by which we must live by.

Yet we do not get to Do that for them? Or will we?

In a public discussion someone explained to me why they thought they should be allowed to vote on this decision. They are against the Amendment but live outside of the St Louis Boundaries and work within them. Though we would **love** to have that support the truth simply put is:

- "It is not their tax base, i.e. (sales, personal property, utilities etc.) being directly affected.
- It will not be their Street Crews and the jobs they do for us, especially when it comes to snow removal that they will be losing. Or **HIGH GRASS** due to lack of enforcement as the Codes are now serviced by the new Metro City.
- It will not be their Police Departments that are being confiscated from them. Thus, they will not be losing additional police protections that we enjoy every day and pay extra for happily, to keep us from becoming victims of crimes before the crime happens versus after.
- They will not have to suffer through increased crime as a result of losing say 5 officers on the roads 24/7 that are replaced by 1 officer on the road 24/7 because the population statistics dictate that is all that's needed.
- It won't be them that has to live under a Government that they were **NOT ALLOWED TO ELECT**.
- It will not be them struggling to provide the standard of Park services we are used to due to the **confiscation of our Sales Tax dollars** and having to **pay the Pensions of current, past and Metro City employees out of the Property Taxes and Utility Taxes we are left with.**

(but of course, this is meant to work towards our elimination as a city to begin with).

- It will not be them that has to **live under a Charter that** cannot be changed except by a 2/3 majority Vote which is near impossible to attain.

**Read the Amendment, it takes away our most basic Citizen Rights**

This vote should be determined by Only the citizens of

St Louis City  
and St Louis County.

Let's let the Board of Freeholders work

as it is designed to work, in this situation.

**Do not take away our Rights as American Citizens....**

**Please Vote No on this Amendment in November 2020.**

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

See <http://www.stopmerger.org/> to stay up to date on this.

<http://www.facebook.com/nocitycountymerger>



Paid for by Amy Poelker.