

Dear friends,

Two propositions to amend the Phoenix City Charter will be voted on in a special election on August 27. Proposition 105 would amend the city charter to permanently stop previously approved light rail expansion within the city. Proposition 106 purports to pay off city pension debt, but would in fact divert spending from vital city services to a single, poorly designed – and possibly unenforceable – plan that harms city residents, and permanently restricts growth.

Both propositions are supported by special interest groups with misleading names. One of the biggest is the “Arizona Free Enterprise Club,” a front for dark money from utilities and the political arm of the Koch brothers, that works to undermine political support for clean energy in the state.

Both propositions would do severe — if not irreparable — harm to arts organizations in Phoenix, with shockwaves felt in adjoining cities. I urge voters who care about the future of the arts in our city to reject these unwise and shortsighted propositions in the August 27 election.

Phoenix is the fifth-largest city in the nation but didn’t even make the Top 20 in a recently published list of arts-vibrant large communities in the US. Passage of Prop. 106 will ensure we stay outside that list. Among other effects, It would immediately limit the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture’s (POAC) investments in arts programs throughout the city – investments with known significant payback. A 2017 study by Americans for the Arts reported “Not-for-profit arts and culture organizations and their audiences in Phoenix contribute nearly \$402 million in direct economic activity to the city.”

Grants from POAC partially underwrite MusicaNova Orchestra’s performance and education programs, including professional orchestra concerts at the Musical Instrument Museum in North Phoenix, young artist concerts at the Arizona Piano Company in South Phoenix, and educational and performance collaboration with Harmony Project in South and West Phoenix. All of these are at risk if POAC is unable to continue this critical investment.

The Phoenix arts community would suffer from Prop. 105 as well. It kills extension of light rail service – forever – and cuts off significant areas of the Valley, including underserved communities in South, West, and East Phoenix from easy access to the downtown arts venues.

Light rail stops near Phoenix Symphony Hall and the Orpheum Theatre, Roosevelt Row, and in the Central Arts District (near the Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix Theatre, Arizona Opera, the Heard Museum, and more), serving venues responsible for much of the nearly half-billion dollars in economic impact I mentioned above. Do we really want to limit growth by these organizations and the economic benefits that goes with it?

Both these dangerous propositions would cause lasting harm to the City of Phoenix. Please don’t let this special election go by without casting your vote against them, and in favor of the arts. Vote No on 105. Vote No on 106.

Sincerely yours,

