

TO: San Diego City Council
FROM: San Diego League of Women Voters
DATE: November 24, 2008
RE: Mid-Year Adjustments to the City Budget

San Diego's crisis is somewhat unique because it's a double whammy. We're trapped in a cyclical calamity being felt throughout the nation. And San Diego is also trapped in a pension plan failure of our own making, which was guaranteed from the very start to cripple us.

Our city is unique in other ways -- first for our wonderful climate. And second for our long history as a city that operates under an old-fashioned gentleman's agreement that has traditionally locks in the status quo and takes no prisoners when it comes to public-minded activists and reformers.

We may see a temporary fix to tide us over for a couple of months but the hard decisions will be left hanging for the new city council. But in reality, the decisions may not really be that hard since there are so few choices.

We can choose to resign ourselves to becoming a first class Acapulco of the north. Our glorious weather, vigorous hotel and visitor industry, convention capabilities; our beaches, safe and secure gated communities and mansions on the hills; our golf courses, gambling resorts, and cruise ship terminals will go a long way to keeping our name high on A-list of travel agencies.

As for the rest -- do we know, much less care about the backside of a town like Acapulco -- the condition of its libraries, streets, community centers, schools, unemployment and underemployment rates, economic health, trash pickups, neighborhood parks, broken water mains?

If that's not an acceptable future for San Diego, we can choose a rational and overdue alternative. Our soon-to-be-reconstituted city council, strengthened by San Diego's threatened neighborhoods and communities and, we hope, by the leadership and cooperation of the mayor's office, can take action by convening a group of reliable financial and legal analysts for an honest, thorough appraisal of the city's financial options.

And yes, that includes analyzing the option of top-to-bottom reorganization known as Chapter 9 / municipal bankruptcy.

We all see what's happening around us. Can it get any clearer? It's time for the new council and mayor to bring everyone to the table to decide how we're going to save our city -- without losing our city in the process.