

Charter Reform History In Portland

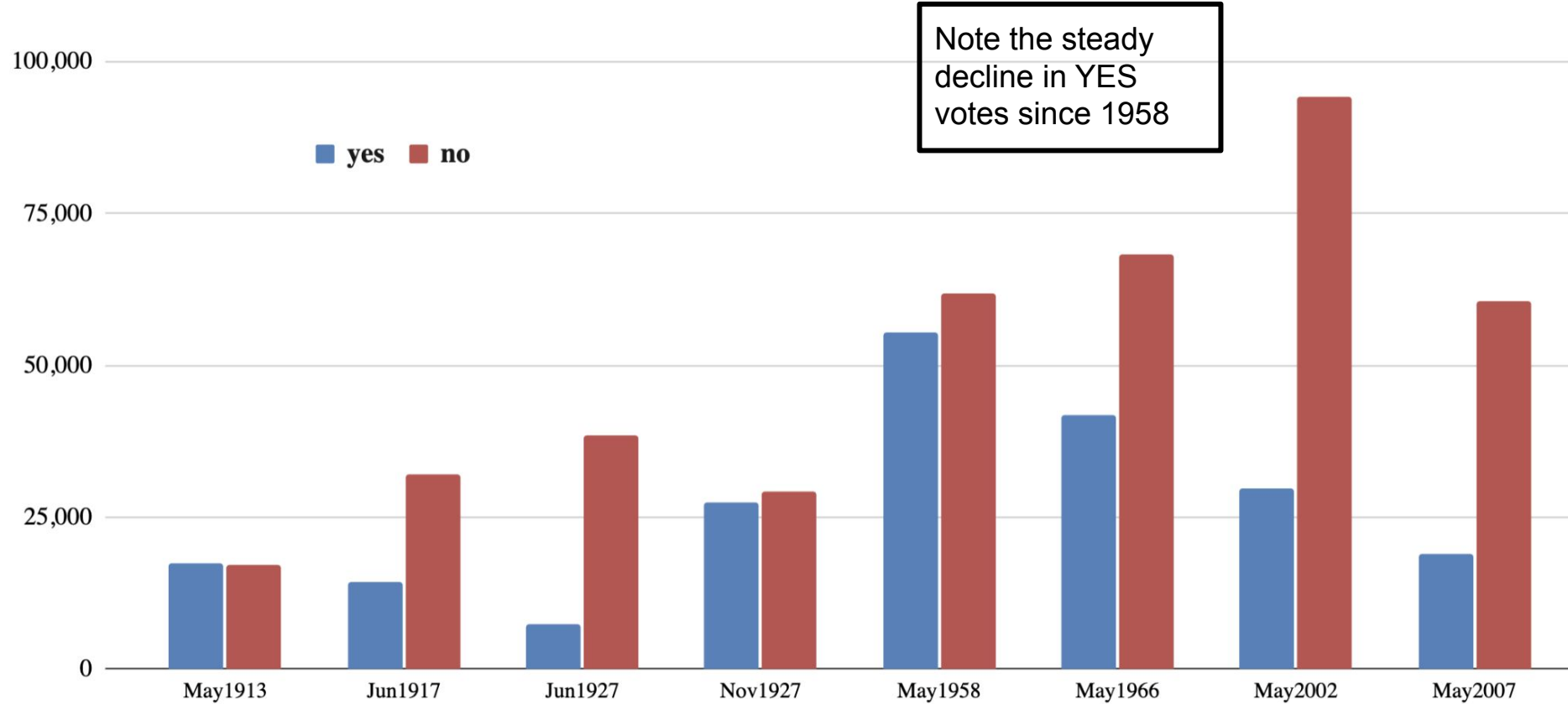
With Focus on 2007

Hank Schottland

How Did We Get Here?

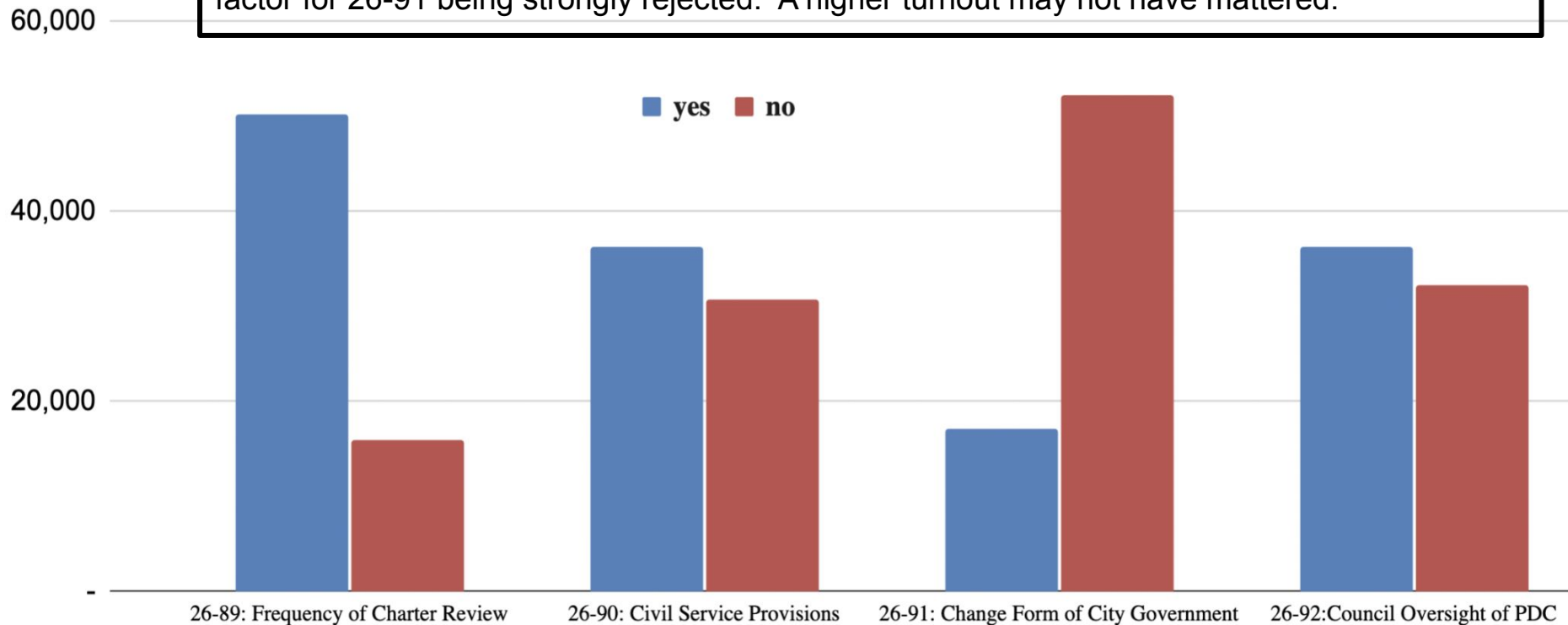
- Well-known history:
 - Our commission form of government was established 1913
 - Multiple ballot measures to reform/replace since then, all failed.
- Why?
- Any useful take-aways to have a successful outcome this time?

Prior Elections



Focusing in on 2007 - 4 charter ballot measures

Note that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the measures passed, so perhaps the light overall turnout was not a major factor for 26-91 being strongly rejected. A higher turnout may not have mattered.



2004-7: getting a ballot measure

- Tom Potter elected mayor in Nov2004 w/ strong voter support (61%), a progressive and popular figure in Portland
- Charter reform was very high on his list of goals, also initiated a large “[bureau innovation project](#)”
- Charter review commission membership finalized March 2006, 26 volunteers with a mix of backgrounds (*“The mayor's aides are going out of their way to find ethnic minorities, women and people who don't normally participate in City Hall forums and focus groups”*, Oregonian 8/31/05), \$400K budget
 - 100 public meetings including 30 “diverse community and neighborhood organizations”
 - 2000 hours of testimony
 - 15 months of work

2004-7: getting a ballot measure (cont'd)

- Significant (and very public) split from the beginning in city council regarding the possibility of moving away from commissioner form of government
- Charter review commission presented a draft that addressed form-of-government but not the council election method
 - EM was “discussed and then set aside” because of concerns that “district reps would not take a city-wide view when forming policy that would affect more than their individual districts”
- Significant pushback/questioning from council members
- Draft revised, charter review committee vote was 12-4 and so it went to city council
- Council was divided and for a while it looked like there might not be 3 votes to send it to ballot...but things changed (Sam Adams was the swing vote)...it became ballot measure 26-91

2007: the campaign

- Several council members did not endorse (or even strongly opposed) 26-91 publicly, although they had agreed it could go to ballot for voters to decide - created a mixed message for voters...a “major factor” in the defeat
- Other well-known voices opposed it: League of Women Voters, Amanda Fritz, Charlie Hales, Bud Clark...
- Significant fund-raising and spending by “In Favor” and “In Opposition” Political Action Committees...each PAC raised & spent ~\$250K
- “In Favor”
 - Top contributors were **business owners, including developers**
 - Focused on **improving efficiency**, policy consistency, freeing up council members to have more time to spend with Portlanders
- “In Opposition”
 - Top contributors were **unions**
 - Focused on **“the mayor would have too much power”**, “it’s not broken, don’t fix it”, “it’s different and that’s why we’re known as an exceptional city”

2007: the campaign (cont'd)

Top campaign contributors

- Supporting 26-91:
 - Williams and Dame Development Inc., \$25K
 - Robert Ball, \$20K
 - Melvin Mark, Jr., \$10K
 - Fox Tower, \$10K
 - Schnitzer Steel Industries, Inc., \$10
 - Timothy Boyle, \$10K
 - Harsch Investment Corp., \$10K
 - Mark Edlen, \$10K
- Opposing 26-91:
 - Local 48 Electricians PAC (4572), \$25K
 - Oregon AFSCME Council 75, \$25K
 - Portland Police Association / 3182, \$24K
 - Portland Firefighters PAC, \$20K
 - AFSCME Local 189, \$20K

Considerations for 2022

- 2007 showed the importance of both the ballot measure and the campaign, two sides of the same coin
 - 2007 PAC spending was balanced but the “In Favor” campaign didn’t capture **voters’ hearts and minds** as well as “In Opposition” did
 - Unclear if any polling was done to help shape the outreach and messaging for voters
- Learn from the past
 - Identify “hot-button” issues and concerns and address them via proactive framing
 - Conduct early, proactive outreach to groups **who were opposed** in 2007 and help create a ballot measure with a better chance of being passed
 - Work through **who would win/lose** if the Form of Government and/or Election Methods change, and use this to help build a campaign
 - Simplify language in the ballot explanatory statement and other outreach material to reach the broadest possible audience

Considerations for 2022 (cont'd)

- There's quite a bit of material on the web that captures the "In Favor" and "In Opposition" viewpoints from 2007...become familiar with these points to help brand/frame the issue for voters this time around
 - Oregonian, Mercury, and WW archives (articles, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, etc.)
 - Voters' pamphlet for the 26-91 ballot measure
 - Web sites such as nwlaborpress.org