

Montgomery's ballot questions A and B

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'For' Question B

The rhetorical static surrounding the so-called “effects bargaining” Question B on the Montgomery County ballot has masked a simple fact: For too long, the county's police chief and his leaders have been hobbled in expeditiously enacting common-sense regulations and procedures needed to manage the department.

Last year's County Council decision to scale back the rights of the police union to go to the bargaining table over the effects of many policy and procedure decisions — such as how and when the video captured by police car cameras is reviewed or how clothing allowances for plainclothes officers are paid — was a step in the right direction.

The police union wasn't pleased with the pending change in a three-decades-old law and successfully petitioned to put the matter before voters in November. In pleading their case, the officers have used one argument that their families could suffer because changes in shifts and assignments could hurt their ability to arrange suitable child care. That's a challenge faced by many hardworking families in today's economy.

Under the change, it's important to note that the police won't lose fundamental collective bargaining rights over pay, benefits, schedules and other vital work rules. Montgomery's public-employee unions have been well treated over many years by pro-union councils and executives and the county police union is the only one in the state with such sweeping bargaining rights that sometimes border on the absurd.

Both major political party central committees have supported the change in rules, a rare two-party signal that the current system requires reform.

Police managers need nimbleness and flexibility in making decisions about the daily operation of a highly professional force of dedicated officers — decisions designed to keep the officers and communities they protect safe.

A yes, or “for” vote on Question B, is the common-sense choice.

Question A

Disabled workers, including veterans, could benefit if voters approve Question A.

By changing the county's charter, county government managers would gain more flexibility in hiring of qualified people with disabilities, a noble goal. There would be no added bureaucratic costs, other than making reasonable accommodations. Managers retain hiring discretion and the program mirrors a successful one that has been in place for years in the federal government and has bipartisan support

It's a simple change that deserves a “for” vote that will affirm the county's commitment to inclusion.