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## Small Businesses Criticize Proposal

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A little-known proposal facing voters in November drew fire yesterday from business owners who denounced it as a bid to soak them for more city fine revenue.

If enacted, the measure would allow the Department of Consumer Affairs to fine more businesses for code violations rather than pursue them in court.

City officials insist this would only help make its processes more effective and manageable, and close gaps that allow some businesses to duck deserved sanctions.

But small businesses represented by lobbyist Richard Lipsky see an effort to convict them of violations "without the normal due process that exists under current law."

"Last year the Bloomberg administration tried to pass this bill through the normal legislative process," Lipsky said. "It was turned down by elected officials because it was unfair."

Consumer Affairs Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra lined up four of her predecessors in requesting that the charter commission put the measure to a vote.

"When the DCA issues violations for deceptive trade practices," the department told the commission, "many businesses ignore the violations because the department cannot hold hearings on [them]."

The best-known proposal advanced by the mayor's charter-revision panel — also appearing on the November ballot — would eliminate party primaries in future municipal elections.

A second question involves whether to rewrite rules governing the city's annual purchases of hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services.

The third proposal, which includes the consumer-affairs measure, also calls for changes meant to "coordinate" the way administrative law judges and hearing officers decide various violations.