



MALDEF

The Latino Legal Voice for Civil Rights in America.

July 15, 2016

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Paul W. Foster, Mayor
City of Redlands
City Hall
PO Box 3005
Redlands, CA 92373

**Chicago
Regional Office**
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Re: Demand for Compliance with California Voting Rights Act

Dear Mr. Foster:

We have received complaints from Latino voters in the City of Redlands that the use of an at-large election system for the election of city council members results in Latino vote dilution and prevents Latino voters from electing candidates of their choice. We reviewed demographic and electoral information pertaining to your jurisdiction with particular attention to the prohibitions of the California Voting Right Act of 2001 (“CVRA”). Based on our investigation, we believe that the City of Redlands is in violation of the CVRA and must convert to a by-district election system.

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The CVRA, California Elections Code § 14027, states in relevant part:

An at-large method of election may not be imposed or applied in a manner that impairs the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice or its ability to influence the outcome of an election, as a result of the dilution or the abridgment of the rights of voters who are members of a protected class...

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Latino residents of the City of Redlands are a “protected class” within the meaning of the CVRA. U.S. Census population data shows that Latinos constitute 30.3% of the population of Redlands. However, none of the five current members of the City Council is Latino. Based on our review of election returns and demographic information, we believe that the lack of success of Latino candidates results from the inability of Latino voters to elect candidates of choice due to racially polarized voting among the electorate, and that continued use of at-large elections therefore violates the CVRA. We therefore demand that the City convert its at-large election system to a district-based electoral system. Under the authority of Government Code § 34886, the

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City Council can effect that conversion by passage of a resolution, and we demand that it do so without delay.

We request your response to this demand by August 12, 2016. In the absence of a satisfactory response, our clients will be forced to seek judicial relief in the form of an action to obtain an order converting the election system from at-large to by-district, together with other relief provided for in the CVRA, including an award of litigation and expert witness costs, and attorneys' fees. The City can avoid the imposition of a judicially-mandated plan, including district maps designed or approved by the Court, by taking appropriate action without the filing of litigation.

We are available to discuss this matter with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt J. Barragan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matthew J. Barragan
MALDEF

MJB/mg

cc: Jon Harrison, Mayor Pro Tem (via U.S. mail)
Pat Gilbreath, Council Member (via U.S. mail)
Paul Barich, Council Member (via U.S. mail)
John E. James, Council Member (via U.S. mail)