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May 19, 2016

VIA U.S. MAIL

Mr. Alan Sarver
President, Board of Trustees
Sequoia Union High School District
480 James Avenue
Redwood City, CA 94062

Dr. James Lianides
Superintendent
Sequoia Union High School District
480 James Avenue
Redwood City, CA 94062

Re: Demand for Compliance with California Voting Rights Act

Dear Mr. Sarver and Dr. Lianides:

We have received complaints from Latino voters in the Sequoia Union High School District that the use of an at-large system for the election of trustees results in the underrepresentation of Latinos by preventing Latino voters from electing candidates of their choice. We reviewed demographic and electoral information with particular attention to the prohibitions of the California Voting Right Act of 2001 (“CVRA”). Based on our investigation, we believe that Sequoia Union High School District is in violation of the CVRA and must convert to a by-district election system.

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...

Latino residents of Sequoia Union High School District are a “protected class” within the meaning of the CVRA. U.S. Census population data shows that Latinos constitute 30% of the total population of your district. However, none of the five current members of the Board is Latino. There has been no Latino Board member elected in the last several election cycles.

Mr. Alan Sarver
Dr. James Lianides

May 19, 2016

Based on our review of election returns and demographic information, we believe that the underrepresentation of Latinos on the Board 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 demand that the Board convert its at-large system to a district-based system under Education Code § 5019.

We request your response to this demand by June 13, 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.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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

Matthew J. Barragan
MALDEF

MJB/mg

cc: Chris Thomsen, Clerk (via U.S. mail)
Carrie Du Bois, Trustee (via U.S. mail)
Georgia Jack, Trustee (via U.S. mail)
Allen Weiner, Trustee (via U.S. mail)