NORCO CITY COUNCIL DEFERS ACTION ON TRANSITION TO A DISTRICT-BASED ELECTION SYSTEM

Norco, CA – After reviewing seven potential boundary maps and receiving hundreds of comments from residents, the Norco City Council unanimously voted to defer action to transition from an “at-large” election system to a “district-based” election system at its meeting of February 21, 2018. Based on the seven potential maps produced by National Demographic Corporation (NDC) on-behalf of the City, the City Council determined that there was no means of dividing the City into Council Districts that would have positive effects on the election of minority candidates different from the current situation of “at-large” voting.

In lieu of immediately transitioning to a “district-based” election system, the City Council decided to conduct more demographic analysis of previous elections in Norco to determine if racially polarized voting exists within the City. This analysis will be conducted by National Demographic Corporation. In addition, the City Council decided to study potential options that may be available to improve the political participation of minorities and the chances of minorities running and being elected to the City Council under the current “at-large” election system. The City Council directed staff to complete these tasks within 45 days before a final decision can be made regarding the transition to a “district-based” election system. In preparation for a potential transition, the City Council selected NDC Yellow 3 Map, which can be viewed on the City’s website here.

On October 2, 2017, the City of Norco was served with a demand letter from a law firm representing the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project alleging the City's current “at-large” election system is in violation of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). The letter further claimed that “at-large” voting results in minority vote dilution and requested that the City voluntarily change to a "district-based" election system, while threatening litigation if district conversion is not implemented. The letter provided no specific facts to support its position, other than the percentage of Latinos in Norco pursuant to the 2010 United States Census and the fact that there is no sitting Latino City Council member. The law firm, which has made this demand on and sued numerous cities throughout the State, has apparently done no demographic study to prove that “racially polarized voting” exists in Norco, or that a “district-based” election system would result in an increased likelihood of a Latino candidate being elected to the City Council.

The City of Norco acknowledges and supports the goals of the California Voting Rights Act, but the purpose of the Act would not appear to be served based on potential boundary maps that have been developed. Norco’s ethnic population is diversified and there are no maps that can be drawn to produce a primary minority district.

For more information, please visit www.norco.ca.us/districts, or contact the City Manager’s Office at citymanager@ci.norco.ca.us.

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