



City of Yakima

News Release

Subject: City of Yakima Council Election Redistricting Proposal

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City and ACLU to Present Separate Election System Proposals to Judge

The City of Yakima and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will present separate proposals to a federal judge this Friday, October 3rd in response to the judge's August 22nd ruling that requires the City's current method of electing Council members to change.

In his August ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Rice determined that the City's current election system violates elements of Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act. Judge Rice directed the City and the ACLU to work together to develop a joint redistricting proposal or, if the City and the ACLU could not agree on a joint proposal, to submit separate proposals to him by October 3rd.

During a special City Council meeting this morning, attorneys contracted by the City to handle the lawsuit, which was originally filed by the ACLU on behalf of former City Council candidate Rogelio Montes and Yakima resident Mateo Arteaga in August 2012, informed the Council that the City and the ACLU would present separate proposals to Judge Rice this Friday.

At its special meeting today, the Council voted 4 (Adkison, Cawley, Coffey, Dittmar) to 3 (Ensey, Ettl, Lover) in favor of presenting a plan to Judge Rice that would change the current election system, which includes four district-specific Council positions and three at-large seats, to a system that would include five district-specific Council positions and two at-large seats.

Under the existing election system, district-specific Council seats are voted on during primary elections only by voters within each district. During general elections, district-specific Council seats and the at-large seats are voted on by voters throughout the city.

Under the City's proposal that will be presented to Judge Rice, the five district-specific Council seats would be voted on only by voters within each individual district in both primary elections and general elections. The proposed new District 1 would contain an eligible voter population that is more than 50% Latino and the proposed new District 5 would contain an eligible voter population that is more than one-third Latino.

Also according to the City's proposal, the two at-large seats would be voted on by voters citywide in both primary and general elections. The top vote getter in at-large races would serve as mayor and the second highest vote getter would serve as assistant mayor.

The City's redistricting proposal can be found on the City's website at <http://bit.ly/1pEwJnV>.

According to the ACLU of Washington's Seattle office, the organization does not intend to make its redistricting proposal public prior to presenting it to Judge Rice this Friday.