

EXHIBIT 1

October 30, 2014

The Honorable Thomas O. Rice
United States District Court
Eastern District of Washington

Re: Rogelio Montes, et al. v. City of Yakima, et al., Case No. 12-CV-3108-TOR

Dear Judge Rice:

We are Yakima Valley Latin@ Leaders for Change, a group of local Latino/a Leaders. Those in our group have worked for many years to make Yakima and the Yakima Valley a better place for all, but most especially a better place for Latino residents to live, work, and raise families. Many of us are business owners and long-time community members. Many of us have run for office and supported other Latino candidates in Yakima. The purpose of this letter is to express support for the 7-single-member district plan for Yakima City Council voting submitted to the court by the plaintiffs.

We believe the plaintiffs' 7-single-member district plan, with two Latino-majority districts, provides the best response to the chronic history of under-representation of Latinos in Yakima City government and suppression of Latino voting. In addition, we believe the 7-single-member district plan reduces barriers to community members who may be able to mount a district-wide campaign but may lack the resources to mount a city-wide campaign. Finally, this plan is fair to all members of the community, both Latino and non-Latino, in that all have equal opportunity to be represented by a specific city councilmember elected by and accountable to constituents in their district.

The 7-single-member district plan is preferable to the City's proposed plan that retains 2 at-large positions because with only one Latino-majority district the City's proposal continues the previous discriminatory voting practices and, consequently, minimizes the opportunity for Latino voters to elect their candidate of choice. We also strongly believe that whatever new electoral system the Court chooses should take effect all at once so that all city council seats are up for election in 2015 and the resulting council is accountable under the new system.

The City of Yakima has a longstanding history of using its electoral system to suppress the voices of minority residents. We have experienced first-hand the lack of representation of Latino communities on the Yakima City Council, and believe this has resulted in neglect on the part of city government toward heavily Latino portions of the city in terms of community safety, basic city services, and economic development. The opportunity for Latinos to elect the representative(s) of their choice is needed in order to address this longstanding neglect.

Thank you for allowing us to express our desire for an election system that is fair and allows everyone in our community to participate in democracy.

Sincerely,

Yakima Valley Latin@ Leaders for Change

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