

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE T CITY OF MERCED

The ballot measure before the voters is to revise the City Charter to change from an “at-large” voting system for the election of Council members to six districts with a single Council member from each district. The districts would have equal population under this measure.

The subject of district elections for Council has been discussed for over a decade and most believed as Merced grew that this system would replace the current one. The Council’s priority to take the steps necessary to make this change was elevated by potential legal action brought by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) alleging the City was guilty of polarized elections in that no Latinos were on the City Council. Although the City denied this allegation, legal analysis indicated that this mere fact was likely to be sufficient for MALDEF to prove a violation of the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 and prevail in court. It is likely the court would order the Council to take the steps it has now taken and also require it to pay MALDEF’s legal fees.

District elections would significantly reduce the cost for a candidate to run for a Council seat since he or she would only have to campaign in a district of approximately 13,500 people instead of 81,000. This ballot measure will ensure that you have a representative who resides within your district in the city. The district election system is intended to create a more diverse and representative Council. The district election system could potentially create a closer relationship between neighborhoods and their Council member and help make your voice heard better at City Hall.

The Merced City Council members and the Mayor urge voters to vote “yes” to change the City Charter and create district elections for the 2016 election.

Mike Murphy, Council Member
Stanley P Thurston, Mayor
Kevin Blake, Council Member
Noah Lor, Council Member
Tony Dossetti, Council Member