

## REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE T

Merced City Council Member Michael Belluomini voted to place this measure on the ballot, but now is arguing the voters disapprove this measure believing a Court would allow more “flexibility” in establishing district boundaries. This belief is misplaced.

The idea of dividing our city into three council districts, rather than six was thoroughly discussed by the Council. It was rejected by the Council because no city in California uses this system. Also, in depth legal research concluded that dividing the council seats into three districts, rather than six, had little chance of being in compliance with the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 (CVRA) and would likely fail in a court test.

The Council also thoroughly discussed the proposed boundary using the Burlington Northern rail line to create a boundary which splits the City in half based on population. This border was established by demographers and results in dividing Merced in half with a margin of error of 1% or less. This would be the anchor line to create the six districts each with equal population.

Two cities in the San Joaquin Valley have been embroiled in litigation concerning the CVRA and have each spent over a \$1,000,000.00 in legal fees and costs. To advocate a “no” vote merely to experiment with an unknown system resulting in huge legal costs to Merced’s taxpayers is not just irresponsible, it is reckless. Again, the majority of the Merced City Council supports a “yes” vote on Measure T.