

From: Ruth Silver-Taube

Date: November 18, 2018 at 9:04:15 PM PST

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Increasing Voter Engagement Measure

Reply-To:

Hello Ms. Taber:

Attached please find a letter from the Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to make mayoral elections occur in the same year as Presidential elections.

Sincerely,
Ruth

Ruth Silver Taube
Coordinator
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition



November 18, 2019

Honorable Mayor and City Council of San Jose,

On behalf of the Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition, I am writing in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to hold mayoral elections on presidential election years. This motion is essential to build City government into a body that reflects San Jose's diverse constituencies to the fullest possible extent.

Currently, the incidence of mayoral races on non-presidential election years fails to facilitate the highest possible levels of voter participation, particularly for voters from historically disenfranchised communities. The numbers are staggering: while 80.5% of San Jose voters turned out for the 2016 election, only 46.6% voted in the 2014 gubernatorial race—and this level of turnout was no anomaly. In 2002, turnout was 68.7% and 48.0% for presidential and gubernatorial races respectively, and other years mirror this trend. The data reveal that those voters most likely to participate in both mayoral and presidential elections are disproportionately white, homeowners, more educated and affluent, and US-born. Infrequent voters—those who vote only presidential elections—are disproportionately people of color, less educated, and closer to the poverty line.

Supporting this amendment will help to maximize voter turnout and ensure that our democratic institutions are truly representative of the wide range of communities that make ours a remarkable city. As it stands, San Jose's mayoral election turnout, at 8 percentage points below the state average, is simply unacceptable.

Alongside Councilmembers Chappie Jones, Don Rocha, and Sergio Jimenez, we urge the City of San Jose to support Councilmember Carrasco's proposal and lead on the historic opportunity to right this wrong.

Best regards,

Ruth Silver Taube
Coordinator
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition

Ann M. Ravel

November 18, 2018

Sent to: toni.taber [REDACTED]

Honorable Mayor Liccardo, Council Members, and Board of Fair Campaign and Political Practices,

I am writing to urge your support for the proposed ballot measure to change mayoral elections in the City of San Jose to coincide with Presidential elections.

My favorable view is informed by my extensive experience in democratic governance – including in political reform as the Chair of the California Fair Political Practices Commission, and as a Presidential appointee to the Federal Election Commission. The purpose of political reform law is to increase public trust in government and to assure citizen participation in the political process. As part of my commitment to these issues, I recently completed a Fellowship at New America Foundation, California, working on policy to increase citizen participation in government and in the political process.

The proposed ballot measure is a meaningful way to encourage greater civic participation, and would establish San Jose as a city committed to encouraging civic involvement in policy issues.

Many more people vote in Presidential elections than in midterm elections. In 2014, only 42% of California eligible voters turned out to vote. In San Jose, the average voter turnout in mayoral elections is below 50%. While this year appears to be a record for voter turnout, traditionally turnout for midterm elections never exceeds 46%.

Even more disconcerting, in the 2014 election in California, only 8.2% of Californians age 18-24, and only 16% of that age who were registered, cast a ballot. Only 28% of registered Latino voters voted. Additionally, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, lower income individuals vote at a much lower rate than the general voting population. These disparities are consequential, particularly at the local level.

It is true that most United States city elections can be accurately described, as one pundit has put it, as anemic. In 2013, just 23% voted in the election that Mayor Eric Garcetti won in Los Angeles; in 2017 the number voting in the mayoral election there was 18%. Even in New York City's election that Mayor DeBlasio won, only 26% of registered voters voted.

There are many factors affecting low voter turnout, but according to political science professor Donald Green of Columbia University, the major reasons are structural ones. Because Americans are faced with many elections over a four year period, it becomes fatiguing and easier to not vote at all in the midterms.

Political scientists Thomas M. Holbrook and Aaron C. Weinschenk, writing in Political Research Quarterly, "Campaigns, Mobilization and Turnout in Mayoral Elections", found, among other remedies for this lack of voting, that shifting local elections to coincide with national contests could drive higher turnout. So, while the proposed measure may not be a panacea to low voter turnout, it is at least one way to increase participation.

Our representative government is intended to represent people equally. While this is important at the federal level, it is vital at the local level where government policy decisions have immediate impact on the lives of the people. It is a major concern when low income individuals, young people and minorities are not represented in the electoral process. Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize winning economist, has written extensively about the impact - when people don't feel as if they have a part in the community, they become more disassociated from our institutions.

For these reasons, I urge you to support the proposed ballot measure. Thank you very much for considering my views.

Very truly yours,

Ann M. Ravel

From:

Sent: Friday, November 16, 2018 2:41 PM

To: Taber, Toni <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Letter

Toni Taber,

Here is letter from Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment.

Rachel A Garcia

Operations Manager

Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment

Office:

Mobile

email:

alternate email:

[Connecting Resources to Families](#)



Amigos de Guadalupe

Center for Justice & Empowerment

Honorable Mayor and City Council of San Jose,

On behalf of Amigos de Guadalupe, I am writing in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to hold mayoral elections on presidential election years. This motion is essential to build City government into a body that reflects San Jose's diverse constituencies to the fullest possible extent.

Currently, the incidence of mayoral races on non-presidential election years fails to facilitate the highest possible levels of voter participation, particularly for voters from historically disenfranchised communities. The numbers are staggering: while 80.5% of San Jose voters turned out for the 2016 election, only 46.6% voted in the 2014 gubernatorial race—and this level of turnout was no anomaly. In 2002, turnout was 68.7% and 48.0% for presidential and gubernatorial races respectively, and other years mirror this trend. The data reveal that those voters most likely to participate in both mayoral and presidential elections are disproportionately white, homeowners, more educated and affluent, and US-born. Infrequent voters—those who vote only presidential elections—are disproportionately people of color, less educated, and closer to the poverty line.

Supporting this amendment will help to maximize voter turnout and ensure that our democratic institutions are truly representative of the wide range of communities that make ours a remarkable city. As it stands, San Jose's mayoral election turnout, at 8 percentage points below the state average, is simply unacceptable.

Alongside Councilmembers [Chappie Jones](#), [Don Rocha](#), and [Sergio Jimenez](#), we urge the City of San Jose to support Councilmember Carrasco's proposal and lead on the historic opportunity to right this wrong.

Best regards,

Maritza Maldonado
Founding Executive Director
Amigos de Guadalupe Center for Justice and Empowerment

From: Asian Law Alliance
Sent: Friday, November 16, 2018 9:23 AM
To: Taber, Toni <toni.taber@sanjoseca.gov>
Subject: ALA LETTERS
Importance: High

Hi Toni: I mailed the hard copies of these letters today. See attached copies.
Sincerely,

Richard Konda
Executive Director
Asian Law Alliance

This message may contain confidential and privileged information. If it has been sent to you in error, please reply to advise the sender of the error and then immediately delete the message.

From: Jethroe Moore
Sent: Thursday, November 15, 2018 5:53 PM
To: Dianna Zamora Marroquin
Subject: Re: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

; Taber, Toni <[REDACTED]>

October 30, 2018

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council of San Jose,

Re: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

On behalf of San Jose/Silicon Valley NAACP, I am writing in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to hold mayoral elections on presidential election years. This motion is essential to build City government into a body that reflects San Jose's diverse constituencies to the fullest possible extent.

Currently, the incidence of mayoral races on non- presidential election years fails to facilitate the highest possible levels of voter participation, particularly for voters from historically disenfranchised communities. The numbers are staggering: while 80.5% of San Jose voters turned out for the 2016 election, only 46.6% voted in the 2014 gubernatorial race—and this level of turnout was no anomaly. In 2002, turnout was 68.7% and 48.0% for presidential and gubernatorial races respectively, and other years mirror this trend. The data reveal that those voters most likely to participate in both mayoral and presidential elections are disproportionately white, homeowners, more educated and affluent, and US-born. Infrequent voters—those who vote only presidential elections—are disproportionately people of color, less educated, and closer to the poverty line.

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Alongside Councilmembers Chappie Jones, Don Rocha, and Sergio Jimenez, we urge the City of San Jose to support Councilmember Carrasco's proposal and lead on the historic opportunity to right this wrong.

Best regards,

Pastor Jethroe Moore II, President

On Thursday, November 15, 2018, 12:01:41 PM PST, Dianna Zamora Marroquin wrote:

Would you be able to attend to speak? Or perhaps send someone?

Also, is it possible for you to send a copy of the letter you sent to Ben to Toni Taber at the City? Her email address is toni.taber@cityofsouthbay.com

Toni's office is the one that ensures that the letters of support get to the Mayor and Council. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you!

Dianna

Dianna Zamora-Marroquin

Communications Director

South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council



From: Jethroe Moore [mailto:jethroe.moore@cityofsouthbay.com]
Sent: Monday, November 12, 2018 9:27 PM
To: Dianna Zamora Marroquin
Subject: Re: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

September 28th?

On Monday, November 12, 2018, 4:09:42 PM PST, Dianna Zamora Marroquin wrote:

Good afternoon Pastor Moore,

Thank you for sending over these letters. We greatly appreciate your support on this issue. I wanted to let you know that the Ethics Commission for the 18th has been canceled and rescheduled for the 28th of September. I will be in contact shortly, with more information.

In the meantime, should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out via email or on my cell at

Thank you,

Dianna

Dianna Zamora-Marroquin

Communications Director

South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council



From: Ben Field [mailto:
Sent: Thursday, November 08, 2018 11:36 AM
To: Dianna Zamora Marroquin
Subject: Fwd: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

----- Original message -----

From: Jethroe Moore

Date: 11/8/18 10:12 AM (GMT-08:00)

To: Ben Field , Ben Field

Subject: Fw: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Jethroe Moore
To: Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo - City of San Jose <[redacted]@sanjose.gov>; District7 <[redacted]>; District6 <[redacted]>; District2 <[redacted]>; District8 <[redacted]>; District9 <[redacted]>; District4 <[redacted]>; Raul Peralez <[redacted]>; Magdalena Carrasco <[redacted]>; Councilmember Chappie Jones <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, October 30, 2018 9:05 AM
Subject: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

October 30, 2018

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council of San Jose,

Re: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

On behalf of San Jose/Silicon Valley NAACP, I am writing in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to hold mayoral elections on presidential election years. This motion is essential to build City government into a body that reflects San Jose's diverse constituencies to the fullest possible extent.

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Alongside Councilmembers Chappie Jones, Don Rocha, and Sergio Jimenez, we urge the City of San Jose to support Councilmember Carrasco's proposal and lead on the historic opportunity to right this wrong.

Best regards,

Pastor Jethroe Moore II, President

SAN JOSE/SILICON VALLEY BRANCH OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

October 30, 2018

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council of San Jose,

Re: Changing the Mayoral Election Year

On behalf of San Jose/Silicon Valley NAACP, I am writing in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to hold mayoral elections on presidential election years. This motion is essential to build City government into a body that reflects San Jose's diverse constituencies to the fullest possible extent. Currently, the incidence of mayoral races on non- presidential election years fails to facilitate the highest possible levels of voter participation, particularly for voters from historically disenfranchised communities. The numbers are staggering: while 80.5% of San Jose voters turned out for the 2016 election, only 46.6% voted in the 2014 gubernatorial race—and this level of turnout was no anomaly. In 2002, turnout was 68.7% and 48.0% for presidential and gubernatorial races respectively, and other years mirror this trend. The data reveal that those voters most likely to participate in both mayoral and presidential elections are disproportionately white, homeowners, more educated and affluent, and US-born. Infrequent voters—those who vote only presidential elections—are disproportionately people of color, less educated, and closer to the poverty line.

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Best regards,

Pastor Jethroe Moore II, President

Executive Officers: Rev. Jethroe Moore II, **President**; Bob Nunez, **1st Vice President**;
Hellen Sims, **2nd Vice President**; Antonio Walker, **Secretary**; Cynthia Joseph, **Treasurer**;
Executive Committee: Nebi Alemu William Armaline Mulageta Habtegabriel, , James Staten, Anna Griffin, Tanya
Patterson, Roxana Marachi, Racy Ming,
Website: <http://www.sanjosenaacp.org>

From: Emma Greenman
Sent: Friday, November 16, 2018 7:47 AM
To: Taber, Toni <toni.taber@sanjoseca.gov>
Subject: Letter regarding San Jose ballot measure

Please find attached Center for Popular Democracy's letter in support of the ballot measure regarding the scheduling of mayoral elections in San Jose.

Best,

Emma Greenman

Emma Greenman

Director of Voting Rights & Democracy

Center for Popular Democracy
+ CPD Action

populardemocracy.org | cpdaction.org

From: "Asian Law Alliance"

Date: November 16, 2018 at 9:22:44 AM PST

To: <toni.taber>

Subject: ALA LETTERS

Hi Toni: I mailed the hard copies of these letters today. See attached copies.

Sincerely,

Richard Konda
Executive Director
Asian Law Alliance

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Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Chappie Jones
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Jones:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of your memo that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

The Asian Law Alliance, along with our community partners, has been working hard to increase the participation of the Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the electoral process. While we have made strides in this effort, we still have much work to do. This simple charter amendment will result in greater participation by our community and other communities of color as well. We pledge to continue our efforts to work with our community to increase voter turnout in both the presidential **AND** midterm elections. ALA would also support a transition to this system by extending the term of Mayor Liccardo from four years to six years.

Sincerely, 

/Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Sergio Jimenez
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Jimenez:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of your memo that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,

/Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Sylvia Arenas
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Arenas:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of the memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco, Councilmembers Jones, Jimenez and Rocha that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,

/ Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Tam Nguyen
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Nguyen:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of the memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco, Councilmembers Jones, Jimenez and Rocha that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,

Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Vice Mayor Carrasco:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of your memo that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,

Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Mayor Sam Liccardo
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Mayor Liccardo:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of the memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco and Councilmembers Jones, Jimenez and Rocha that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,

Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Lan Diep
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Diep:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of the memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco, Councilmembers Jones, Jimenez and Rocha that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely...

/ Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Don Rocha
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Rocha:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of your memo that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,


Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Deb Davis
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Davis:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of the memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco, Councilmembers Jones, Jimenez and Rocha that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,


Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Raul Peralez
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Peralez:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of the memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco, Councilmembers Jones, Jimenez and Rocha that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

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Sincerely,

Richard Konda
Executive Director



Asian Law Alliance

November 16, 2018

Councilmember Johnny Khamis
City Hall
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

Re: Mayoral election dates

Dear Councilmember Khamis:

The Asian Law Alliance continues to be in full support of the memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco, Councilmembers Jones, Jimenez and Rocha that would place on the ballot an amendment to the San Jose City charter to hold mayoral elections concurrent with the national Presidential elections.

We support this change because it will increase voter turnout. As you know, many cities that have their mayoral elections at the same time as presidential elections have *very high levels of voter turnout*. Since the mayor of San Jose is the only city-wide elected official, the broadest possible participation by all segments of the city is good government.

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Sincerely,

Richard Konda
Executive Director

From: Sameena Usman
Sent: Monday, November 26, 2018 3:04 PM
To: Taber, Toni <toni.taber>
Cc: Jessica Vollmer
Subject: Mayoral Election Year

Hello Ms. Taber,

My name is Sameena Usman and I am the Government Relations Coordinator for the San Francisco Bay Area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. Attached is our organization's letter of support for moving mayoral races to presidential election years. We feel that this would encourage more participation from voters in San Jose.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Take care,

Sameena

Sameena Usman
Government Relations Coordinator

Council on American-Islamic Relations
San Francisco Bay Area Office

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San Jose Mayor and City Council
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San Jose, CA 95113

Honorable Mayor and City Council of San Jose,

On behalf of the San Francisco Bay Area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-SFBA), I am writing in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to hold mayoral elections on presidential election years. This measure is essential to build city government into a body that reflects San Jose's diverse constituencies to the fullest possible extent.

Currently, the incidence of mayoral races on non-presidential election years fails to facilitate the highest possible levels of voter participation, particularly for voters from historically disenfranchised communities. The numbers are staggering: while 80.5% of San Jose voters turned out for the 2016 election, only 46.6% voted in the 2014 gubernatorial race—and this level of turnout was no anomaly.

In 2002, turnout was 68.7% and 48.0% for presidential and gubernatorial races respectively, and other years mirror this trend. The data reveal that those voters most likely to participate in both mayoral and presidential elections are disproportionately white, homeowners, more educated and affluent, and US-born. Infrequent voters—those who vote only presidential elections—are disproportionately people of color, less educated, and closer to the poverty line.

Supporting this amendment will help maximize voter turnout and ensure that our democratic institutions are truly representative of the wide range of communities that make ours a remarkable city. As it stands, San Jose's mayoral election turnout, at eight percentage points below the state average, is simply unacceptable.

Alongside Councilmembers Chappie Jones, Don Rocha, and Sergio Jimenez, we urge the City of San Jose to support Councilmember Carrasco's proposal and lead the way on the historic opportunity to right this wrong.

Best regards,

Zahra Billoo, Esq.
Executive Director

WASHINGTON D.C.

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From: Emma Greenman
Sent: Friday, November 16, 2018 7:47 AM
To: Taber, Toni <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Letter regarding San Jose ballot measure

Please find attached Center for Popular Democracy's letter in support of the ballot measure regarding the scheduling of mayoral elections in San Jose.

Best,

Emma Greenman

Emma Greenman

Director of Voting Rights & Democracy

Center for Popular Democracy
+ CPD Action



11/15/2018

Honorable Mayor and City Council of San Jose,

On behalf of Center for Popular Democracy, I am writing in support of a ballot measure to amend the San Jose City Charter to hold mayoral elections on presidential election years. This motion is essential to build City government into a body that reflects San Jose's diverse constituencies to the fullest possible extent.

Currently, the incidence of mayoral races on non-presidential election years fails to facilitate the highest possible levels of voter participation, particularly for voters from historically disenfranchised communities. The numbers are staggering: while 80.5% of San Jose voters turned out for the 2016 election, only 46.6% voted in the 2014 gubernatorial race—and this level of turnout was no anomaly. In 2002, turnout was 68.7% and 48.0% for presidential and gubernatorial races respectively, and other years mirror this trend. The data reveal that those voters most likely to participate in both mayoral and presidential elections are disproportionately white, homeowners, more educated and affluent, and US-born. Infrequent voters—those who vote only presidential elections—are disproportionately people of color, less educated, and closer to the poverty line.

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Alongside Councilmembers Chappie Jones, Don Rocha, and Sergio Jimenez, we urge the City of San Jose to support Councilmember Carrasco's proposal and lead on the historic opportunity to right this wrong.

Best regards.

Emma Greenman
Director of Voting Rights & Democracy
Center for Popular Democracy + CPD Action

November 29, 2018

Dear Members of the San Jose City Council:

We are writing to express our strong support for a proposal currently under consideration by the City Council to move the timing of San Jose's mayoral elections from its current "off-year" cycle to the more visible presidential election cycle, which historically generates much higher levels of participation. The current structure and timing of San Jose's mayoral elections date back to 1974 after the city first moved its mayoral elections from "isolated" odd years to even-numbered gubernatorial years. While this change improved voter participation rates, what we know about contemporary mayoral elections in San Jose is that still just a small share of people eligible to vote will actually cast ballots. We believe that boosting participation rates in the city's mayoral elections requires a call to action.

To provide a bit of context, in 2014, Mayor Liccardo was elected with just 43% of registered voters casting ballots. In 2018, when the mayor was re-elected in the June 5th California primary, the numbers unfortunately look even worse. Just 36% of registered voters in San Jose cast ballots for mayor. Put another way, 64% of the city's registered voters didn't cast a ballot for mayor in the 2018 election cycle.

To understand why this matters, consider that elections form the foundation of our democracy. Through elections the people choose the representatives who make authoritative decisions on our behalf. They send signals about our policy desires. Low participation weakens the link between the people and their government, and contributes to policy outcomes that are often unrepresentative of the wide body of interests inherent in a diverse polity.

Our current arrangement would be more defensible if the voting public shared the same policy preferences, or had the same experiences with government, as non-voters. Political science research demonstrates very clearly that this is not the case. Individuals with more resources are more likely to vote than those with fewer resources. On a variety of issues including policing and law enforcement, affordable housing, or protection from environmental pollution where the interests and experiences of the wealthy and poor often diverge, our low participation rate narrows the contours of our most important public debates. It indirectly skews policy because it defines the public to whom our elected officials feel most accountable.


A wide body of political science research, including research on local elections in California, suggests the timing of mayoral elections is *the most important* predictor of turnout among cities (for a good review of the findings see Zoltan Hajnal and Jessica Trounstine's "Where Turnout Matters": The Consequences of Uneven Turnout in City Politics," *The Journal of Politics* (2005) 67, 2: 515-535; and Melissa Marschall and John Lippie's 2016 report "*Mayoral Elections in California, 1995-2014*).


Based on publicly available voting turnout data, we estimate that moving the timing of San Jose's mayoral elections from the current "off year" cycle to presidential years would boost turnout in the city's mayoral elections by about 35%.

Naturally there is concern any time a proposal for changing our city elections system is raised. Changing the timing of our mayoral elections is no small matter and we encourage the City Council to carefully weigh the competing arguments that surround the issue. Some residents and current council members, for example, have expressed concern that moving the mayoral election to presidential election years would further politicize our local politics. Another area of concern is that local issues will get "lost" in the chaotic political environment of presidential election years. Still others have expressed reservations about the possibility of extending Mayor Sam Liccardo's current length of term by an additional two years in order to get the city's mayoral elections timed, beginning in 2024, to the presidential cycle. These are all valid concerns, but we also feel these concerns are either overblown or could be sufficiently addressed. We hope to play a part in these discussions moving forward.

Democratic governance by its very nature demands popular participation. Boosting turnout would strengthen the bonds between city residents and their elected officials. It would help increase trust in our city institutions while also increasing the odds that the winners of mayoral contests have competed for votes in an electorate that more closely mirrors the communities they serve. By repositioning San Jose's mayoral elections, we would recommit ourselves to longstanding democratic ideals.

Sincerely,


Garrick Percival, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Political Science
San José State University


Mary Curcio-Percival, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Political Science
San José State University