

May 2018

Dear Neighbor:

As a voter you face an important choice on election day June 5 to improve our election system in Santa Clara to make our city government more closely reflect the will of the people. As members of the Santa Clara 2017 Charter Review Committee that developed Measure A, we want to explain our reasons for this proposal and why we urge you to vote **Yes on Measure A**.

It's true that our city has been sued by outside groups who claim our current election system is illegal and unfair — and so far a judge has agreed with them. If Measure A fails, our city will still need to change its election system, where the judge may order the city to be divided into seven districts with no elected mayor. But even if there had been no lawsuit or if the plaintiffs lose, we believe Measure A is better than the current system and would still urge you to vote **Yes on Measure A**.

Democracy works best when voters feel like their votes matter, and where our concerns and points of view are represented in government. The current numbered seat system means two people you like may pick the same council seat and run against each other, while at the same time, there are other numbered seats where you may not like any of your choices. Also, incumbents don't always get good challengers. Under our current system, the candidate who wins office may not even have the support of the majority of the voters.

Measure A will make our election system better by allowing you to rank your candidates in your order of preference. Your vote will have more power to elect the candidates you like best without needing to vote strategically or worry about your vote being wasted on a candidate who can't win. Measure A will also ensure that the north and south sides of the city have equal representation on the council, with 3 councilmembers representing each half.

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit asked the judge for our city to be carved up into seven districts, no longer letting voters elect our mayor. While similar district plans have helped improve diversity of representation in some cities more segregated than Santa Clara, it's wrong for us. Santa Clara is a richly diverse and integrated community. Voting no on Measure A would lead to multiple lines that would divide us from expressing our common interests instead of helping us elect a representative council.

After months of deliberation and debate, our diverse Charter Review Committee unanimously supported what's now before you as Measure A.

Measure A strikes the right balance of electing local leaders who care about the interests of the city as a whole and the needs of our neighborhoods. A two-district plan with ranked choice voting makes the most sense for Santa Clara, and similar plans have worked in many places around the U.S. and the world. Measure A helps ensure balanced representation from the north and south and lets council members invest more time and attention on the local, neighborhood-based interests of the district they represent.

Yes on Measure A will create fairer elections, give us better choices when voting, and ensure that every vote counts. Measure A will reduce the influence of special interests and dark money that have plagued our elections in the past. It will become easier for grassroots candidates to get elected with support from voters who share their interests in their own neighborhoods, and for a full range of diverse viewpoints to be represented on the council.

Change is hard. Santa Clara is unique. We're "the Center of What's Possible," and that's why we proposed a plan that improves our election system and makes it better. At the end of the day, what matters is that the people of Santa Clara feel that their votes matter and their voices are heard. **We hope you'll join us in voting Yes on Measure A.**

Sincerely, the undersigned members of the 2017 Charter Review Committee who all live in Santa Clara,

Tino Silva, Chair
Keith Stattenfield, Vice-Chair
Hazel Alabado
Hosam Haggag
Mary Hanna-Weir, Civil Rights Attorney
Saskia Feain
Beverly Silva
Teresa Sulcer

P.S. Measure A was a community-led measure made by Santa Clarans for Santa Clara. Most of the opposition are from outsiders and special interest groups. Let's not have outsiders dictate what's best for us. Please vote Yes on A.

Paid for by Better Elections for Santa Clara: Yes on Measure A

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