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Anaheim City Council Ends Controversial Delay On Voting Districts
Voters in Latino-majority district to be included in first elections this November

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Anaheim City Council approved what has been dubbed “The People’s Map” last week—after nearly scrapping the popular voting districts plan last month.

“Residents have been working for years to have our voices heard in City Hall,” said Martin Lopez, a long-time Anaheim resident and voting-rights advocate. “Now we need to keep showing up to City Council to keep the plan moving forward.” The next meeting of the Anaheim City Council is January 26.

Just before midnight last Tuesday, the Council voted 5–0 to approve the voting-districts map unanimously recommended by its Advisory Committee on Electoral Districts last year—what many in Anaheim call “The People’s Map.”

The Council also decided which districts will have their first votes later this year, sending districts 1, 3, 4, and 5 from The People’s Map to the November 2016 ballot. This sequencing was particularly controversial for District 3, which has a Latino majority. Latino residents make up 53 percent of the city’s population.

The People’s Map was nearly scrapped late last year. The Council commissioned a panel of five retired judges, who developed the voting districts map with community input throughout a five-month, ten-meeting process. Council initially approved the map in October, but at a December 8 meeting, members of the City Council threw out the Committee– and community-recommended map and recommended to start over in February 2016.

At the following meeting on December 15, a coalition of residents and immigrant– and voting-rights groups staged a protest in Council chambers, saying the delay would undermine a years-long civic process designed to improve electoral representation for marginalized groups.

“The People’s Map”—and the series of community hearings that created it—arose from a settlement of a 2012 voting rights lawsuit against the City of Anaheim. The suit was filed weeks before two back-to-back fatal shootings of young Latino men by Anaheim police that resulted in four days of civil unrest.

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