



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2015

CONTACT: Joese Hernandez | 714-252-3705 cell | jhernandez@occord.org | @OCCORDOC

Protests Shut Down Anaheim City Council After Delay on Voting Districts Map

Process to draw map arose from settlement of 2012 voting rights lawsuit against City

ANAHEIM, Calif.—Chanting protestors abruptly ended the Anaheim City Council meeting Tuesday after a vote that would delay implementing a key part of the city’s first municipal districting map.

The Council voted 3-2 against a motion that would have asked its Advisory Committee on Electoral Districts to recommend the order in which each district would have its first election, after which the crowds erupted in shouts and chants of “The People’s Map” and “shut it down.” When protestors would not respond to the mayor’s requests for order, he adjourned the meeting.

“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. That suit was filed just weeks before the city experienced four days of civil unrest following two back-to-back fatal shootings of young Latino men by Anaheim police.

About 350 supporters of the districting process and its recommended map turned out for the vote, packing council chambers and the overflow room, and leaving dozens waiting outside in the December chill.

At a rally before the meeting, a coalition of residents and immigrant- and voting-rights groups said the Council’s delays undermine a years-long civic process designed to improve electoral representation for immigrants and other groups. They say delays especially undermine Latino residents, who make up 53% of the city’s population and who participated heavily in creating The People’s Map.

“The public process we engaged in under the guidance of the five judges on the Advisory Committee has been the gold standard for creating a better Anaheim for all of its residents,” said Anaheim resident Martín Hernandez. “Members of the Council seem to want to erase a true democratic process.”

“All of Anaheim has come together around a single districting map—the People’s Map,” says Anaheim resident Marisol Ramirez, a voting-districts advocate since she was 17. “People who have been shut out of City Hall for years have been inspired by the process. Council’s delay tramples on the hope we’ve built together.”

On November 3, the Anaheim City Council unanimously approved a voting-districts map submitted by its Advisory Committee on Electoral Districts, a panel of five retired judges commissioned to develop voting districts with community input through a five-month, ten-meeting process. The Committee unanimously approved the final map—dubbed “The People’s Map” because of its basis in broad participation by residents from all districts of the city.

But at the December 8 City Council meeting, members of the Council did an about-face, threw out the Committee- and community-recommended map and its district mapping process, and recommended to start over again next February.

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