



Vision, Values & Action

To Improve Our Communities

1010 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
Galveston, Texas 77550  
409-939-8017  
info@gulfcoastinterfaith.org  
www.gulfcoastinterfaith.org

October 24, 2011

Doug Godinich  
City Secretary  
City Hall  
823 Rosenberg  
Galveston, Texas 77553

Re: Galveston Collaborating Organizations Public Testimony on City of Galveston  
Redistricting Proposals for Public Hearing of October 27, 2011

Dear City Secretary Godinich,

We have worked with members of the community, our respective organizations, and with each other in good faith to arrive at a fair map that complies with the Voting Rights Act and United States Constitution. We did not consider the incumbency of any current council member since, if reelected, they would only serve one more two year term. We believe any adopted map must be fair for the community for years and many elections beyond the upcoming spring election.

### **Background**

On May 20, 2011 we sent a letter to the Department of Justice objecting to the City of Galveston's fourth attempt to adopt a 4-2-1 modified at-large plan because it was retrogressive and diluted minority voting strength. The Obama Department of Justice notified the City of Galveston on October 3, 2011 that it was not withdrawing the ongoing objection from the Clinton and Bush Departments of Justice.

On October 7, 2011 we sent a letter to the City of Galveston advising your legal counsel of our support for the adoption of Map R by the City Council as the preferred map for the upcoming public hearing and for later adoption and submission for clearance to the Department of Justice.

The City Council held a workshop on the morning of October 13<sup>th</sup> where its attorney Bob Heath reviewed the process for approving a plan. He suggested the council decide on one plan to submit to the public at a public hearing. During the review there was also some discussion of challenging the fourth Department of Justice rejection of Galveston's attempt to adopt a 4-2-1 plan by filing a law suit in federal court in Washington DC. The discussion ended with a decision to not proceed in federal court. There was also a presentation of Map R wherein Mr. Heath described Map R as:

*a good plan...has support of the minority community....about as strong a Hispanic district and about as strong of an African-American district that can be drawn...very compact....and would pass muster with the Department of Justice. (Galveston Municipal Television, Workshop Video of October 13, 2011)*

After the presentation of Map R, council members made a slight adjustment to Map R which resulted in shifting about 100 voters in the Channelview neighborhood. The change was of no statistical significance to the racial composition percentages in any district. Then some council members stated a desire to review Map O. The council spent most of the meeting tinkering with Map O and eventually settled on an altered configuration referred to as Map O2. The council concluded its work by then deciding to submit two, rather than one map, to the public-Map R2 and O2.

**Discussion**

After the 2000 census an attempt was made by the City Council to adopt a 4-2-1 plan. This was attempt number 3. It was rejected by the Bush Department of Justice and the City Council proceeded to redraw the lines for its 6-0-1 single member district system. Those new lines were submitted and approved by the Department of Justice.

The August 2, 2011 letter from Bob Heath to Department of Justice provided argument and information to support the change to the partial at-large 4-2-1 system. The arguments were rejected for the 4<sup>th</sup> time. Included in the letter at p.3 was the breakdown of the districts after they were redrawn after the 2000 census. The statistics simply and clearly show there were three over 50% Latino/African-American districts.

Map 2000 (population 57,247 with 44.15% Anglo)

	Anglo	Latino	African-American	L/A-A	Asian/other
#1	21.24	23.72	53.64	77.36	.47/.93

#2	26.58	24.42	46.43	70.85	.95/1.61
#3	46.14	22.56	19.11	41.67	9.28/2.90
#4	37.23	44.32	16.04	60.36	1.01/1.40
#5	65.27	18.94	9.32	28.26	4.82/1.65
#6	65.35	20.79	9.89	30.68	2.27/1.71

Of course, who ended up being elected in the last decade may have been affected by voter registration, candidate quality, voter turnout and apathy, unforeseen or perceived interruptions and distractions such as weather, voter suppression, etc. Since 2000 Galveston has suffered through Hurricane Ike which contributed to a 2010 population reduction of around 10,000 from 57,247 to 47,743 but an insignificant change in the percentage of Anglos from 44.15% to 45.03%. The other changes of significance was the reduction in the African-American population from 25.19% to 18.63 and increase in the Latino population from 25.77% to 31.26% and the relocation of the Latino and African-American population. These storm induced changes created an additional challenge to drawing a map that would fairly represent the interests of Latinos and African-Americans in Galveston. There was and still is roughly a 50/50 split between Anglos and Latinos/African-Americans.

Map R2 contains three over 50% Latino/African-American districts.

Map R2 (population 47,743 with 45.03% Anglo)

	Anglo	Latino	African-American	L/A-A	Asian/other
#1	17.39	34.56	46.20	80.76	.40/1.45
#2	39.86	33.64	23.41	57.05	.87/2.22
#3	54.94	21.04	12.71	33.75	8.58/2.74
#4	30.72	53.11	13.47	66.57	1.11/1.59
#5	53.18	28.78	11.68	40.46	4.50/1.86
#6	73.33	16.40	5.08	21.48	3.16/2.03

Map O2 only contains two over 50% Latino/African-American districts.

Map O2 (population 47,743 with 45.03% Anglo)

	Anglo	Latino	African-American	L/A-A	Asian/other
#1	17.43	34.55	46.18	80.73	.40/1.45
#2	47.78	30.52	18.05	48.57	1.14/2.50
#3	46.68	24.68	17.93	42.61	8.29/2.42

#4	30.73	53.11	13.49	66.60	1.11/1.56
#5	57.84	25.09	10.62	35.71	4.53/1.93
#6	69.02	19.63	6.16	25.79	3.21/1.98

Hurricane Ike and the subsequent population relocation make it difficult to draw lines reflecting the 2010 population of Galveston and compliance with the Voting Rights Act. Map O2 clearly diminishes the voting strength of Latinos/African-Americans when compared to Map 2000 or Map R2 and thus affects their ability to elect and influence the election of candidates of their choice.

**Conclusion**

The Department of Justice reminded the City of Galveston in its October 3, 2011 rejection letter that Galveston had the burden of demonstrating the proposed change to a 4-2-1 plan was free of discriminatory purpose and retrogressive effect. The letter stated on page 3:

*Under the existing method of election, minority voters currently have the ability to elect a candidate of choice in three of the six single-member districts. In contrast, this ability would exist only in two of the four districts and in neither of the two at-large positions under the proposed system.*

We agree with the Department of Justice that under the existing method of election, Latino/African-American voters currently have the ability to elect a candidate of choice in three of the six single-member districts. We believe, in contrast, this ability would only exist in two of six districts under the proposed Map O2. This is the same prohibited retrogression in violation of Section 5 that the Department of Justice rejected ten days before the City Council work session that created Map O2.

We believe Map R2 best reflects the roughly 50% split between Anglos and Latino/African-Americans by creating three districts where Latino/African-Americans have an ability to elect a candidate of choice. We believe it is a fair map for all the reasons articulated by Mr. Heath during the City Council work session on October 13, 2011. Further, we believe Map R2 is the only map presented to the public for consideration that can be submitted without objection and be approved by the Department of Justice.

We believe Map R2 is the best map for the City of Galveston and encourage the City Council to adopt it for submission for clearance to the Department of Justice.

Please accept this letter as our written testimony for the public hearing to be held on October 27, 2011. We request that a copy be provided to the mayor and each council member and also placed in the written record that will be forwarded to the Department of Justice.

Respectfully submitted,

---

David Miller  
President, Galveston Unit, NAACP

---

Anna Olivares  
President, LULAC Council 151

---

Leon Phillips  
President, Galveston County Coalition for Justice

---

Cornelia Banks  
Chair, North Side Task Force

---

Joe Compian  
Leader, Gulf Coast Interfaith

---

Stephen McIntyre  
Leader, Gulf Coast Interfaith

