



A Message from the City of Cypress to the Community

Standing Up for Cypress



Dear Cypress Residents,

The City of Cypress has been sued by the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project and two residents, Kathryn Shapiro and Malini Nagpal, for an alleged violation of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). First and foremost, the City has received no evidence supporting such a claim and therefore we emphatically disagree that a violation exists. Despite this, attacks in the media and online have fueled misinformation in our community. It's time to set the record straight.

As your representatives, we care deeply about our community and upholding the law. When we received the letter alleging that our current at-large City Council election system dilutes the vote of Asian American voters, we were disheartened and surprised. As we analyzed the letter's demands and the source of the complaint, we quickly found that Cypress is just one of many California cities targeted for such allegations.

While two residents have lent their names to the complaint, Cypress is one of many cities that Shenkman & Hughes PC, a Malibu-based firm, has sent demand letters to over the past ten years to compel them to move from at-large to district elections. In fact, in 2017, the LA Times published an article on this widespread practice featuring Kevin Shenkman titled "Meet the Malibu lawyer who is upending California's Political System, one town at a time."

Cypress may not be the only city sued by this firm, but we stand out as one of few cities to stand up and refuse to abandon our at-large voting system without evidence. Time and again, the complainants have failed to provide us with details or evidence of the alleged violation. Contrary to what is alleged, our review of the claim revealed undeniable trends of Asian American voters successfully making their voices heard in Cypress' at-large elections.

Many cities around us have acquiesced after receiving these routine letters from Shenkman & Hughes PC, not because they agree with the allegations but because they lack the resources to fight back.

Cypress residents currently have the right to elect every member of their City Council. We refuse to surrender that voting power without evidence.

Beyond analyzing our voting trends, we contacted the community after receiving the initial complaint letter—we conducted a survey and hosted a series of public forums throughout the City—both in person and online. The message was loud and clear—residents like the at-large election system and the opportunity to vote for all five council members.

If a legal proceeding produces evidence of a CVRA violation, we assure you that we will be the first ones eager to find a solution that meets state law as well as the needs of our unique City. Until then, the disenfranchisement of our residents is not an option that we believe is fair or reasonable.

Our city should base its final decision on a bedrock of facts, evidence, and transparency. We will not strip voters of the opportunity to elect the entire City Council without evidence of violation of state law and are ready to stand up for Cypress!

In service,
City of Cypress