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11	ROGELIO MONTES and MATEO ARTEAGA,	
12	Plaintiffs,	NO. 12-cv-3108-TOR
13	·	FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF AMICUS
14	VS.	CURIAE
15	CITY OF YAKIMA; MICAH CAWLEY, in his official capacity as Mayor of Yakima; and	Noted for Hearing:
16	MAUREEN ADKISON, SARA BRISTOL, KATHY COFFEY, RICK ENSEY, DAVE	October 23, 2014 Without Oral Argument
17	ETTL, and BILL LOVER, in their official capacity as members of the Yakima City	
18	Council,	
19	Defendants.	
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STATEMENT OF INTEREST

FairVote's familiarity with the use of the single vote method in at-large elections renders it particularly well-suited to expound on that method's usefulness as a remedy in this case. FairVote submits this brief to highlight the benefits of using the single vote method to elect multiple officers at-large in Yakima as opposed to exclusively using single-member districts. FairVote is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1992 whose mission is to advocate for fairer political representation through election reform. FairVote's mission rests on the belief that implementing voting methods like ranked choice voting, cumulative voting, the single vote, and other American forms of non-winner-take-all multi-member elections will lead to representation in government more reflective of society's diversity. FairVote encourages public officials, judges, and the public to explore beyond the exclusive use of single-member districts as a remedy for unlawful elections systems. FairVote has consistently presented arguments promoting the use of fair representation voting as a legal and effective remedy for voting rights violations, including in areas where race is a divisive and controlling factor. See generally, FAIR VOTE, http://www.Fair Vote.org.

FairVote has previously filed amicus curiae briefs in cases involving the permissibility of fair representation voting as a remedy under the Voting Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973-1973bb-1 (2013), and the California Voting Rights Act, CAL. ELEC. CODE §§ 14025-32 (2012). See, e.g., Sanchez v. City of Modesto, 145 Cal. App. 4th 660 (2006); United States v. Vill. of Port Chester, 704 F. Supp. 2d 411 (S.D.N.Y. 2010). In addition, FairVote has published scholarship on the topic of fair representation voting and voting rights. See, e.g., Rob Richie & Andrew Spencer, The Right Choice for Elections: How Choice Voting Will End Gerrymandering and Expand Minority Voting Rights, from City Councils to Congress, 47 U. RICH. L. REV. 959, 988–1002 FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF AMICUS CURIAE - 1

(2013); Jerome Gray, *Winning Fair Representation in At Large Elections* (1999), *available at* http://www.fairvote.org/the-voting-rights-act-jerome-gray-and-fair-voting-in-alabama (describing the effect of the single vote method and cumulative voting in 32 local jurisdictions in Alabama).

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

FairVote submits this brief to highlight the benefits of using the single vote method to elect multiple officers at-large in Yakima as opposed to exclusively using single-member districts. Utilizing the single vote method to elect at-large members of the Yakima City Council would guarantee that Latino voters would have the power to elect a Latino-preferred candidate when they surpass the "threshold of exclusion." While reaching this threshold *guarantees* a preferred candidate's victory, in any given election, some candidates are nearly certain to be elected with a share of votes below this threshold. This is due to votes from the majority community not being evenly divided among the same number of candidates as seats. Meanwhile, election of a Latino-preferred candidate to an at-large seat would mean that every Latino in the city would have a Latino-preferred representative, rather than only those confined to a majority-minority or opportunity district.

Drawing on the experiences of other local jurisdictions, FairVote encourages the parties and the court to consider remedial election methods that elect more than two members at-large with a fair representation voting method. As Plaintiffs note in their remedial redistricting plan, the threshold of exclusion decreases as the number of candidates increases. The simplest approach, administratively, would be to slightly modify Defendants' proposed remedial plan by retaining Yakima's four residency districts and three at-large seats, but restrict voting in the residency districts to voters living in those districts, redraw district lines to create one majority FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* - 2

Latino district, and elect the three at-large seats in a non-staggered election by a fair representation voting method such as the single vote method, which the City of Yakima has already proposed. Doing so would guarantee the election of any candidate with more than one-fourth of the votes cast, and would provide practical access to representation for candidates with lower vote shares. In addition, FairVote suggests the parties support voter outreach efforts regardless of the remedy to ensure that Yakima's electorate is aware of the new rules and able to seize the opportunities they provide for voters to elect preferred candidates.

ARGUMENT

I. THE SINGLE VOTE METHOD OFFERS A BETTER REMEDY FOR LATINO VOTER DILUTION THAN SINGLE-MEMBER DISTRICTS

Although single-member districts are often used to remedy voting rights violations, fair representation voting in at-large elections, under appropriate conditions, has promoted voter participation, created fair representation, and provided flexibility as electorates change. These methods, including the single vote method, allow politically cohesive minority groups to elect at least one candidate of choice without requiring the majority vote share required to guarantee election under a winner-take-all method.

Political scientists represent this winning proportion of the vote, known as the threshold of exclusion, with the following mathematical formula: one divided by the sum of one plus the number of seats to be filled (plus one vote), or:

$$Threshold = \frac{1}{(Seats + 1)} + 1 Vote$$

Steven J. Mulroy, *The Way Out: A Legal Standard for Imposing Alternative Electoral Systems as Voting Rights Remedies*, 33 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 333, 340–41 (1998). For example, in a single-seat race, a candidate would need one-half of the votes cast (plus one vote) to be FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* - 3

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guaranteed to win; for a two-seat race, a candidate would need one-third of the votes cast (plus one vote) to be guaranteed to win; for a three-seat race, a candidate would need one-fourth of the votes cast (plus one vote) to be guaranteed to win; and so on. Note that the threshold is *not* the minimum number of votes required to be elected; candidates can win election with less than that threshold. Rather, it merely is the proportion of the vote that *guarantees* election.

FairVote has advocated for three forms of fair representation voting as remedies for vote dilution claims brought under the Voting Rights Act: ranked choice voting, cumulative voting, and the single vote method. FairVote most strongly recommends ranked choice voting as a general reform and as a remedy for vote dilution claims under the Voting Rights Act because it provides for fair representation while simultaneously fostering meaningful competition among diverse candidates and improving the tenor of campaigns. *See generally*, Andrew Spencer and Rob Richie, *supra*. However, because Defendants have recommended the use of the single vote method, this brief focuses on that method.

A. The Single Vote Method Can Serve as an Effective Remedy in Yakima

The Voting Rights Act does not require the use of single-member districts alone as remedies for violations of the Voting Rights Act. *United States v. Euclid City School Bd.*, 632 F.Supp.2d 740, 751–52 (N.D. Ohio 2009) (adopting the defendants' proposed at-large single vote plan over the plaintiffs' proposed single member district plan). Rather, the inquiry must look to the facts specific to each individual case. *See Harper v. City of Chicago Heights*, 223 F.3d 593 (7th Cir. 2000), 600 ("[A]t-large procedures that are discriminatory in the context of one election scheme are not necessarily discriminatory under another election scheme."). Setting aside the remedial nature of Defendants' proposed districts, whether the single vote method for at-large seats is sufficiently remedial turns on whether the threshold of exclusion is low enough FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* - 4

to provide Latino-preferred candidates with the opportunity to be elected. *Euclid City School Bd*., 632 F.Supp.2d at 761–62.

The threshold of exclusion is not too high for Latino voters to successfully elect a candidate of choice at-large under Defendants' proposed remedial plan. While Plaintiffs accurately represent the operation of the threshold of exclusion, Plaintiffs' Motion for Entry of Proposed Remedial Plan and Final Injunction at 9, No. 12-CV-3108 (Oct. 3, 2014) [hereinafter ACLU Brief], their characterization could benefit from some additional detail. It is true that Latino voters would need to exceed the threshold of exclusion to *guarantee* election, but candidates can be elected with less than the threshold under fairly ordinary circumstances. If even one majority-favored candidate receives more than the threshold number of votes or if majority-favored candidates outnumber the seats available, and each such candidate attracts at least some votes, a Latino-preferred candidate would no longer need to reach the threshold. Needing to surpass the threshold of exclusion to win is only necessary if 100% of the majority group not only votes for other candidates but also coordinates to perfectly split their support evenly among the necessary number of majority-group candidates.

For example, suppose four candidates ran for the two at-large seats: two competitive majority-preferred candidates, one less competitive majority-preferred candidate, and one Latino-preferred candidate. Suppose 75% of voters voted for the other three majority-preferred candidates and split their votes such that 50% voted for one candidate, 20% to the second, and 5% to the third. That would mean that the Latino-preferred candidate could be elected to one of the two seats with just over 20% of the vote. In addition, more than 70% of voters would be represented by a candidate for whom they voted. In short, Latino voters will be able to elect

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candidates of choice with two at-large seats elected by the single vote method provided at least some non-Latino voters vote for them as well.

The amount of crossover voting from white voters in Yakima's prior elections indicates that Latino-preferred candidates can be elected in at least one of the at-large seats with the single vote method. Yakima's past primary election results allow for an approximation of how the single vote method would work in Yakima elections for two seats. The primary has effectively been a single vote system, with the two "winning" candidates advancing to the general election in November. The second-place "winner" in these primary elections has had vote shares as low as 28.62%, Yakima County Canvassing Board, Primary 2007 Amended Canvass Report (2007), available at http://www.yakimacounty.us/vote/English/Returns/2007Primaryresults.pdf (Susan Whitman, 2007 District 4 primary), 25.71%, YAKIMA COUNTY CANVASSING BOARD, CUMULATIVE REPORT (2011), available at http://www.yakimacounty.us/vote/English/Returns/ 2011PrimaryResults.pdf (Rich Marcley, 2011 District 2 primary), and 21.44%, YAKIMA COUNTY CANVASSING BOARD, CUMULATIVE REPORT (2013), available at http://www.yakimacounty.us/vote/English/Returns/Primary2013.pdf (Charles Noel, 2013 atlarge position 5 primary). In both elections cited by this Court as examples of polarized voting, the Latino candidates of choice who lost in the single winner general elections had in fact "won" one of two positions in the primary election. In 2009, Sonia Rodriguez and Benjamin A. Soria both advanced to the general election with 38.15% of the vote and 31.82% of the vote in their respective primaries. Montes et al. v. City of Yakima et al., No. 12-CV-3108 at 36-37 (E.D. Wash. Aug. 22, 2014). It is therefore inaccurate to portray the use of the single vote method as "an experiment in minority vote dilution." ACLU Brief at 11.

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The single vote method would be more consistently effective as a vote dilution remedy if Yakima were to adopt a four district remedial plan with three seats elected at-large. As Plaintiffs note, the threshold of exclusion lowers as more seats are elected at-large on the same ballot. Under Defendant's proposed remedial plan, only two of the seven seats are elected at-large, which results in a threshold of one-third of the votes cast (plus one vote). If three seats were elected at-large instead, allowing Yakima to retain its current four district map, then the threshold would be only one-quarter of the votes cast (plus one vote). The Hispanic/Latino share of registered voters in 2013 was 19.9%, and it has steadily risen by about 1 percentage point every year. See the following table, generated using data from L2 VoterMapping technology (http://www.votermapping.com/):

	Hispanic/Latino	
Election	Absolute Total	Share of Electorate
2013 General	7172	19.9%
2013 Primary	6955	19.6%
2011 General	5565	17.5%
2011 Primary	5448	17.3%
2009 General	4566	15.9%
2009 Primary	4514	15.8%

This fact, coupled with the expected rate of crossover voting and the fact that the Latino vote share would not actually need to exceed the threshold for a Latino-preferred candidate to be

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¹ If four seats were elected at-large, the threshold would be only one-fifth of the vote cast (plus one vote), though as the number of district seats goes down, it will be more difficult to draw one that is majority Latino.

elected as mentioned above, suggest that with three seats elected at-large by the single vote method, a Latino-preferred candidate could be reliably elected in the near future, if not presently.

Regardless of remedy, we recommend that Yakima conduct a voter education campaign. Remedies can best achieve their full potential if eligible voters and candidates are aware of the change and the potential it creates for fair representation. *See Vill. of Port Chester*, 704 F. Supp. 2d at 451. Latino turnout has been disproportionately low in Yakima city elections, making public awareness of the election date important.² This is especially true where vote dilution is due in part to historical discrimination in education and socio-economic factors, a point Plaintiffs are right to raise. *Id.* Combined with voter education in both English and Spanish, the use of the single vote method can address vote dilution in Yakima.

B. <u>The Single Vote Method Serves Latino Voting Rights Better than Single-Member</u>
Districts Alone

In addition to effectively remedying racial minority vote dilution, fair representation voting methods like the single vote carry a number of other benefits. Because single member districts are winner-take-all, large numbers of voters remain unrepresented when those voters do not compose a majority of a district. If Yakima were to adopt a seven-district plan and Latino voters were then able to elect preferred candidates in two districts, all Latino voters in the other five districts would still be unable to elect a candidate of choice in the event of ongoing racially polarized voting. On the other hand, if two or three at-large seats in a single vote system were

² One alteration that would likely enhance equitable turnout would be to hold the municipal election on even-numbered years to consolidate it with state and federal general elections.

Although this would be a novel practice in Washington, it is common in California.

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used to remedy vote dilution, the entire Latino population would be empowered to elect a preferred candidate. All Latinos in the Yakima would then have a direct connection to a representative whom they could approach regarding constituency services.

Fair representation voting methods avoid the problem of "virtual representation." Instead of grouping voters by district and then having all seven council members represent a different majority group in each district, methods like the single vote allow voters to "self-district" by choosing representatives themselves. A smaller number of districts would still ensure that local concerns are addressed, and at least one such district should be majority-Latino, but there are also concerns that deserve recognition outside of voters' district boundaries, and groups outside each district's majority deserve representation as well.

Plaintiffs note that the use of the single vote method does "not address the barriers

Latinos face running for at-large positions in terms of money and resources." ACLU Brief at 10.

Although campaigns would be citywide, candidates would be competing for a smaller share of votes than a majority, because the threshold of exclusion is no higher than one-third of votes in a two-winner race and one-quarter of votes in a three-winner race, allowing candidates to focus on smaller communities within the larger city. Fair representation systems like the single vote method have consistently elected the preferred candidates of racial minorities when their participation rates approach the threshold of exclusion, and this has included elections in which those racial minority candidates were heavily outspent. See Steven Hill & Rob Richie, New Means for Political Empowerment in the Asian Pacific American Community, 11 HARV. J. ASIAN AM. POL'Y REV. 335, 340 (2000–2001) (citing the election of Bobby Agee in Chilton County, Alabama despite being outspent 20-1 by the highest-spending candidate).

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Further, the inclusion of single vote at-large seats will incentivize Latino-preferred candidates to activate Latino voters, who currently vote at much lower rates than white voters, thus increasing representation and empowering voters throughout Yakima. *See Vill. of Port Chester*, 704 F. Supp. 2d at 453; *see also* Briffault, *Lani Guinier and the Dilemmas of Democracy*, 95 COLUM. L. REV. 418, 424 (1995) ("The [Voting Rights] Act was intended to initiate a process of political mobilization [and] grass roots organization."). This will be especially true if the Court requires Yakima to engage in a voter education campaign as part of its remedy. The more Latino voters participate, the more reliably they will elect a preferred candidate, as their share of registered and active voters approaches their share of eligible voters.

Finally, the single vote and all other fair representation voting methods are wholly race neutral. As such, they completely avoid concerns of "racial gerrymandering" and "balkanization" mentioned in the *Shaw* line of cases. *See Miller v. Johnson*, 515 U.S. 900, 920 (1995); *Vill. Of Port Chester*, 704 F. Supp. 2d at 453 (finding that cumulative voting avoids the constitutional concerns with racial gerrymandering). In fact, there is compelling evidence that fair representation voting fosters the construction of cross-racial coalitions among both voters and legislators. *See*, Steven J. Mulroy, *Alternative Ways Out: A Remedial Map for the Use of Alternative Electoral Systems as Voting Rights Act Remedies*, 77 N.C. L. REV. 1867, 1903 (1999); Richard H. Pildes & Kristen A. Donoghue, *Cumulative Voting in the United States*, 1995 U. Chi. Legal F. 241, 297 (1995).

II. <u>FAIR REPRESENTATION VOTING HAS SERVED AS AN EFFECTIVE</u> <u>SECTION 2 REMEDY IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS</u>

About 100 jurisdictions in the United States elect officers using either ranked choice voting, cumulative voting, or the single vote method. The term "limited voting" generally refers FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* - 10

to the election of officers at-large or in multi-member districts in which voters have fewer votes than the number of seats to be elected, and some variant of limited voting is used in dozens of U.S. cities, including most municipal offices in Connecticut (including for the Hartford, Connecticut city council) and many local offices in Pennsylvania (including the at-large positions on the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania city council). Fair representation voting methods, including the single vote method, have a strong backing in academic literature surrounding the Voting Rights Act. See generally Lani Guinier, supra; Pildes & Donoghue, supra. Almost all adoptions of fair representation systems have followed actual or threatened litigation under the Voting Rights Act. See Engstrom, Cumulative and Limited Voting: Minority Electoral Opportunities and More, 30 St. Louis U. Pub. L. Rev. 97, 98 (2010). They have been approved by courts even in situations where the method employed is not provided for in state law. Vill. of Port Chester, 704 F. Supp. 2d at 449.

Fair representation voting methods have proven highly effective as remedies for Voting Rights Act cases. Many jurisdictions with minority populations that had gone unrepresented under winner-take-all at-large systems elected representatives preferred by those minority populations for the first time using fair representation voting methods. *See*, *e.g.*, Engstrom, *supra*, at 125 (first Latino representative); Robert R. Brischetto & Richard L. Engstrom, *Cumulative Voting and Latino Representation: Exit Surveys in Fifteen Texas Communities*, 78 Soc. Sci. Q. 973, 975 (1997) (first Latino and Native American representatives); Pildes & Donoghue, *supra*, at 272–73 (first black representative). In one instance, a jurisdiction where African Americans were 11.3% of population was able to elect its representative of choice in the very first use of the system in 1988, and that candidate has continued to win ever since, consistently earning strong support among African American voters. *See* Pildes & Donoghue, FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* - 11

supra, at 262. In cities and counties across the country, fair representation methods like the single vote method are giving minority groups a voice and a stake in their government that they have never before enjoyed.

Plaintiffs' characterization of Defendants' proposed plan as replacing "the City's current hybrid at-large system with a new hybrid at-large system," ACLU Brief at 4, ignores the critical distinction between electing at-large by a winner-take-all method, like the use of numbered positions, and electing at-large by a single vote method that gives minorities the power to achieve adequate representation. *See Chapman v. Meier*, 420 U.S. 1, 16 n.10 (1975) ("criticism of multi-member districts is rooted in their winner-take-all aspects") (quoting *Whitcomb v. Chavis*, 403 U.S. 124, 158–59 (1971)). Similarly, every case to which Plaintiffs cite as striking down a hybrid system deal only with at-large seats elected on a winner-take-all basis. ACLU Brief at 6.

Indeed, courts routinely uphold systems that include at-large elections with fair representation voting as remedies for vote dilution claims. *See*, *e.g.*, *Vill. of Port Chester*, 704 F. Supp. 2d 448-49 (adopting cumulative voting in at-large districts); Dillard v. Chilton County Bd. of Educ., 699 F. Supp. 870, 876 (M.D. Ala. 1988) (upholding cumulative voting in at-large districts); *Banks v. Peoria*, No. 87-2371 (C.D. Ill. 1987) (approving cumulative voting in at-large districts). At least one court has imposed the use of cumulative voting (similar to the single vote method) in at-large elections after a finding of Section 2 liability after the defendant jurisdiction did not propose any remedy itself. *Cottier v. Martin*, 475 F. Supp. 2d 932, 932 (D.S.D. 2007). Fair representation voting at-large satisfies the "one person, one vote" requirement more precisely than districts, especially given shifts in population over time. *Id.* at 939 (cumulative voting "achieves precise population equality" because it uses only one district in which all voters FAIRVOTE'S BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* - 12

have the exact same number of votes); *McCoy v. Chicago Heights*, 6 F. Supp. 2d 973, 984 (N.D. III. 1998) *rev'd sub nom. on other grounds by Harper v. City of Chicago Heights*, 223 F.3d 593 (7th Cir. 2000); *Cane v. Worcester Cnty.*, 847 F. Supp. 369, 374 n.8 (D. Md. 1994), *rev'd on other grounds*, 35 F.3d 921 (4th Cir. 1994)³; *see also* Lani Guinier, *(E)Racing Democracy*, 108 HARV. L. REV. 109, 135–36 (describing how cumulative voting satisfies one person, one vote). It has also been approved by courts even when in tension with state law. *Vill. of Port Chester*, 704 F. Supp. 2d at 449; *see also Voinovich v. Quilter*, 507 U.S. 146, 157 (1999) (state redistricting law superseded after a finding of a violation of the Voting Rights Act); *Cleveland Cnty. Ass'n for Gov't by the People v. Cleveland Cnty. Bd. Of Comm'rs*, 142 F.3d 468, 476 (D.C. Cir. 1998) (the Supremacy Clause of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution allows Voting Rights Act remedies to

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, this Court should give deference to Yakima's preference for a non-winner-take-all, fair representation system at-large. A remedial map consisting of at least three at-large seats elected by the single vote or other fair representation voting method would be preferable, accompanied by a city-backed plan of voter outreach, and would provide the abovementioned benefits to the city of Yakima.

supersede state law).

³ Both *Chicago Heights* and *Worcester Cnty* were reversed because the defendant jurisdiction proposed the use of districts, and courts defer to a defendant jurisdictions choice of legally acceptable remedy. *Worcester Cnty*, 35 F.3d at 928–29; *Chicago Heights*, 223 F.3d at 602. In this case, Defendants have proposed the use of the single vote method, and so that deference militates in favor of upholding its use.

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