

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS & COMMUNICATIONS II
Office of the City Clerk

City Council of the City of Napa
Special Meeting
January 21, 2020

FOR THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NAPA:

AFTERNOON SESSION:

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Written communication from Gary Orton.

**City Council Special Meeting
1/21/2020
Supplemental II - 3. Public Comment
From: Gary Orton**

My name is Gary Orton. I live in Napa. I speak for the Napa County Progressive Alliance. We are a group of local residents who seek to unite Napa County's diverse communities and to promote social justice, community-based economics, environmental sustainability, and good government reforms. We work to elect government officials who share these values and who do not accept donations from corporations or other businesses. In all our activities, we make it a priority to address the needs and concerns of, and develop leaders among, those who have been disadvantaged by the system. Transitioning to district elections aligns with our stated mission.

We understand that all of you worked hard to attain your positions because you also want to create positive change for our community. Personally, that was my motive in, twice, successfully campaigning door-to-door for a seat on the Belmont City Council. I can attest that smaller election populations encourage grass-roots candidates who refuse to rely on large donations from corporations or businesses because campaign costs are reduced.

You should note that race and ethnicity are not under the Voting Right Act the predominant factors in districting. Rather, you are required to consider economic factors, such as the percentage of persons below the poverty level, educational attainment, median income, and language proficiency. Our diverse communities deserve to have their voices heard and to participate in robust, meaningful discussions of public policy. Not only did the legislature intend the Voting Rights Act to make it easier to create district elections, they are popular with the wide majority of voters. Napa is an outlier; more than two-thirds of the cities in California with a population comparable to Napa have already abandoned at-large elections.

Knowing that you are seekers of positive change and possessors of goodwill, Napa County Progressive Alliance is confident that after careful consideration of the facts and law, you will adopt a resolution of intent to transition to by-district elections. Not only is it right; adoption of the resolution is the only **fiscally responsible** action to take.