

# City of Santa Rosa



## Legislation Details

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**File #:** 17-0790      **Version:** 1      **Name:** CVRA Options  
**Type:** CC- Report      **Status:** Agenda Ready  
**File created:** 8/14/2017      **In control:** City Council  
**On agenda:** 8/29/2017      **Final action:**  
**Title:** REPORT - RESOLUTION - CALIFORNIA VOTING RIGHTS ACT

**BACKGROUND:** The Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (the "Education Project"), through its attorney Kevin Shenkman, has submitted a certified letter challenging the City's at-large election of council members. The Education Project alleges that racially polarized voting within the City has combined with the City's at-large election system to impair the ability of Latino voters to elect candidates of their choice or to influence the outcome of an election. The Education Project thus alleges that the City's at-large election system may violate the California Voting Rights Act, and it threatens litigation if the City does not voluntarily transition to a district-based election system. Attorney Shenkman has submitted similar claims against cities, counties and school districts throughout California. The City Attorney recommends that the Council give direction as to the appropriate response to the allegations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** It is recommended by the City Attorney that Council state its intent to respond to a legal challenge, brought under the California Voting Rights Act, to Santa Rosa's at-large voting system. Council action may be by: 1) Motion directing staff to research and defend against claims that the City's at-large election system violates the California Voting Rights Act; 2) Resolution stating Council's intent to place a measure on the ballot in June 2018, or as soon thereafter as is practical, proposing an amendment to the City Charter to transition the City to a district-based election system, and directing staff to undertake associated actions; 3) Resolution stating Council's intent to transition to district-based elections by ordinance adopted pursuant to Elections Code Section 10010 and Government Code Section 34886, and directing staff to undertake associated actions; or 4) Motion directing staff to seek declaratory relief in Superior Court.

**Sponsors:** City Attorney

**Indexes:** Not a Project

**Code sections:**

**Attachments:** 1. Staff Report, 2. Attachment 1, 3. Resolution\_1, 4. Exhibit A\_Res 1, 5. Resolution\_2, 6. Exhibit A\_Res 2, 7. Exhibit A\_Res 2\_REVISED 9/8/17, 8. Presentation

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
8/29/2017	1	City Council	to waive reading of the text and adopt	Pass