

March 24, 2023

Contact: Linda Seifert

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For Immediate Release

SLO COUNTY CITIZENS

FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT

SLOCCGG, Petitioners, and County of SLO Reach Tentative Agreement

County of San Luis Obispo to Select New Board of Supervisors Map.

San Luis Obispo County, CA – San Luis Obispo County Citizens for Good Government and the County of San Luis Obispo filed a stipulated agreement to settle the lawsuit regarding the County’s adoption of a new County Board of Supervisors district map.

The agreement calls for the County to rescind the adopted Patten map that violated California law and adopt a new map that complies with redistricting requirements.

“Achieving this result on behalf of the citizens of San Luis Obispo County is a victory for democracy,” said Jim Gardiner, SLOCCGG Director and President. “During the course of this litigation, we have come to appreciate that the preservation of free and fair elections is a goal worth fighting for.”

Under court supervision, the agreement orders the County to set aside the Patten map and reopen the administrative process to adopt a map that complies with the Fair Maps Act and the California Constitution no later than May 15, 2023. Public hearings are tentatively scheduled for April 4 and April 18, and community members are encouraged to attend the hearings to express support for a legal map that ensures fair representation in every district in the county.

“We applaud the willingness of the County to bring this matter to resolution, and expect the upcoming hearings and adoption of a new map to bring a final resolution to this costly misstep by a Board of Supervisors that chose to ignore the law and adopt a map intended to favor one political party and ensure its stronghold on county leadership and policy for decades to come,” said Patricia Gomez, Board member and lawsuit plaintiff.

Once a new, legally compliant map is adopted and presented to the court, the legal case will end. The agreement calls for this process to be completed before preparations for the 2024 election cycle begin, ensuring local democracy is present in the next election.

Additionally, the agreement calls for the County to pay \$300,000 in attorney fees to SLOCCGG. Although this does not cover all litigation costs, it was accepted to avoid spending more money on continuing litigation.

The SLOCCGG Board is grateful to community members who contributed time and money to this effort. Allene Villa, Patricia Gomez, and Don Maruska are specifically commended for their important roles as plaintiffs in the lawsuit alongside SLOCCGG.

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“SLOCCGG’s appreciation goes first to the thousands of community members that supported our efforts, both financially and with their interest in our work,” said Linda Seifert, SLOCCGG Director. “Ensuring democracy lives on is a costly process, and we could not have achieved this result without them.”

In addition, the League of Women Voters is acknowledged for their support. They attended hearings and spoke out against the Patten map from the beginning before joining the lawsuit alongside SLOCCGG. The County staff who worked with SLOCCGG’s legal team to end the litigation are also appreciated.

About SLO County Citizens for Good Government

SLOCCGG was formed in December 2021 after the Patten Map was adopted by the SLO County Board of Supervisors, with a mission of bringing back fair, responsible, good government to San Luis Obispo County, and to support policies and ordinances that enable good government. The organization raised funds to support its initial effort to challenge the Patten Map and filed a lawsuit against the County in January 2022, contending that the map did not comply with the California Elections Code Section 21500, which sets forth the criteria that the Board of Supervisors was mandated to follow in redistricting after the census.

Legal History

In December 2021, the SLO County Board of Supervisors adopted a new redistricting map, known as the Patten map, despite public opposition, and despite being unnecessary by California law. However, before the spring 2022 election, SLOCCGG and three petitioners filed a lawsuit, calling for the rescission of the Patten Map and asking the court to grant a preliminary injunction to stop its implementation.

SLOCCGG received support from more than 2,500 donors, which allowed them to retain the services of Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger to prosecute the lawsuit against the county. Several local attorneys also assisted the firm by donating their services.

Judge Rita Federman found in ruling on SLOCCGG’s Motion for a Preliminary Injunction that SLOCCGG was likely to prevail on the merits of its case at trial. The League of Women Voters also joined the lawsuit in support of SLOCCGG’s mission and goals.

Throughout the litigation, SLOCCGG received support from thousands of county residents, including those who made contributions, sent encouraging emails, and read frequent newsletters. No one in SLOCCGG’s leadership, including several local attorneys and its CPA, received payment for their work. Only the retained counsel, Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger of San Francisco, were compensated. The entire litigation process was funded completely by dedicated citizens who donated in support of a fair election process.