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December 28, 2021

Ms. Lara Christensen, City Clerk
City of Atascadero
6500 Palma Ave.
Atascadero, CA 93422

By certified mail

Re: Notice of Violation of California Voting Rights Act

Dear Ms. Christensen:

First, we would like to acknowledge the work of the City Council and city staff on behalf of the City of Atascadero.

On behalf of Veronica Ulloa-Nevarez, a member of a protected class and registered voter in the City of Atascadero, this letter and the enclosed report assert that the City of Atascadero's method of conducting elections violates the California Voting Rights Act (the "CVRA").

Pursuant to California law, the Atascadero City Council now has 45 days from receipt of this letter to adopt a resolution outlining its intention to transition to district elections, detailing specific steps it will take to facilitate this transition, and estimating the time-frame for this transition. If the City Council does not adopt a resolution to this effect within 45 days from the receipt of this letter, then a legal action will be commenced in California Superior Court (San Luis Obispo County) to require the City of Atascadero to institute district elections pursuant to the CVRA.

District elections are sweeping California. No government jurisdiction in the state of which this office is aware has successfully defended a complaint alleging a violation of the CVRA. Accordingly, we hope to negotiate a collaborative settlement with the City of Atascadero that would cap costs and enable more participation by the City Council in the transition to district elections than would be the case through litigation.

District elections elsewhere have been tied to greater representativeness on, and more candidates seeking election to, councils and boards, and to greater participation and interest by the community in local government agencies and elections. There are many benefits that public agencies receive from district elections, including higher voter turn-out and more community participation, as described in the enclosed report. Many government agencies in San Luis Obispo County, as well as elsewhere, have decided to institute district elections. The terms of existing City Council members are not affected by the transition to district elections.

Currently, at least 13 government agencies in San Luis Obispo County utilize or have decided to implement district elections, including, most recently, the Atascadero Unified School District. If the Atascadero City Council votes to establish district elections within the 45-day statutory period, legal and demographic costs are capped at \$30,000. If this matter were to proceed to litigation, then, pursuant to the CVRA, there would not be a cap on costs.

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Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you and resolving the issues presented. We believe Atascadero will be an even better city with district elections—more representative of the people and in compliance with the law.

Very truly yours,

Robert Goodman

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