

# VISALIA—IS IT TIME TO CHANGE TO DISTRICT ELECTIONS?



The City of Visalia has a Charter which is like a local Constitution. When the City's Charter was written nearly 100 years ago, the population was less than 10,000 and it called for at-large City Council elections. A vote by the citizens is required to change the Charter.

With a population of over 125,000 and a change in State law which may require district elections, is

it time to change to district elections or stay with at-large? Citizens will have the opportunity to vote on a change to the Charter when a ballot measure goes before voters in November, 2012.

This document is intended to inform citizens on the differences between at-large and district elections and provide resources to obtain more comprehensive information.

## What are At-Large Elections?

- Candidates live anywhere in the City.
- All voters vote for all Council members.

## What are By-District Elections?

- Candidates live in the District.
- Voters elect one Council member in their district.

## Dates to Remember

**October 8, 2012**  
Absentee ballots available

**October 22, 2012**  
Last day to register to vote

**October 30, 2012**  
Last day to request an absentee ballot

**Read all about it**  
Visit [ourvisalia.com](http://ourvisalia.com)

**Share your Views with City Council**  
Email your comments to [visaliacitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:visaliacitycouncil@gmail.com) or call 559-713-4310 and leave a message.



**REGISTER TO VOTE**  
Last day to register to vote is **October 22, 2012**

## Election Process Task Force Recommendations

### SHOULD VISALIA CHANGE TO DISTRICT ELECTIONS OR STAY WITH AT-LARGE ELECTIONS?

A diverse group of citizens appointed by the City Council reviewed the issues related to district and at-large elections. Below are their reasons for recommending a ballot measure on district elections as well as discussion points for at-large elections.

#### DISTRICT ELECTIONS?

- State law prohibits at-large elections in some circumstances;
- District elections may result in a more diverse Council;
- Having a Council member from one district may improve citizen access;
- Over the last 10 years, Council members have tended to live in the same area of town, leaving other areas underrepresented, including the Northeast, North Central, and Southeast;
- More candidates may choose to run for Council because of the reduced cost and time commitment associated with running a district-wide campaign.

#### AT-LARGE ELECTIONS?

- If at-large elections are working, why change?
- Council members elected by district may act in the best interest of their area rather than the City as a whole.
- In at-large elections, voters vote for all five Council members. In district elections, voters only vote for one.
- The cost of redrawing District boundaries every 10 years and the cost of City Council and staff operations may end up higher with district elections.
- Using at-large elections put a citywide focus in campaigns and Council deliberations.

### WHAT WOULD YOUR DISTRICT LOOK LIKE?

If voters approve district elections, district boundaries would be drawn using the following:

- Citizen input on criteria to consider;
- Comments and review by citizens on proposed district boundaries prior to implementation;
- State-mandated requirements of topography, geography, cohesiveness, contiguity, integrity, compactness of territory and communities of interest.



**VOTE**  
NOVEMBER 6, 2012

