

UCLA

**Latino Policy &
Politics Initiative**

LUSKIN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

UCLA Voting Rights Project

3250 Public Affairs Building

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1656

latino.ucla.edu/votingrights

November 5, 2019

Dear Yakima City Councilmembers,

The UCLA Voting Rights Project ("VRP"), a program of the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative ("LPPI"), as part of its mission to engage the university and its faculty and students in important legal issues affecting the right to vote, is aware of the issues raised by the Columbia Legal Services ("CLS") as described in their letter of yesterday. Our project consisting of faculty, students and legal professionals, have given careful consideration to the conditions in Yakima including the historical conditions that give rise to the Council's consideration of changes to the City's Charter. We share the concerns of CLS and others that proceeding with these Charter changes would violate state and federal law.

The Council should not proceed to implement the Charter changes that are clearly designed to deprive racial minorities from reasonable voting power recently granted them under the *Montes* decision, under federal Voting Rights Act. The Council should make itself aware of the case of Pasadena, Texas that recently tried similar maneuvers to deprive Latino citizens of the right to vote. In Pasadena, after a long and expensive lawsuit, the federal court ultimately ruled against Pasadena and ordered the city to obtain preclearance of any and all voting changes in the future. *See*, Voting Rights Act, Section 4.

The UCLA VRP will continue to monitor the City of Yakima, in partnership with the Columbia Legal Services and other stakeholders, and will proceed as is necessary to prevent any attempts to weaken or dilute the votes of any citizens in Yakima.

Sincerely,



Matt A. Barreto, Ph.D.

UCLA Professor Political Science & Chicano Studies

Faculty Director, Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (LPPI)



Chad W. Dunn, JD

Director of Litigation, UCLA Voting Rights Projects