



MEDIA RELEASE

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“Settlement serves the best interest of voters in Yakima County and Washington”

Spearheading a voting rights lawsuit filed against Yakima County, the Seattle-based organization OneAmerica was adamant the only way to resolve the case was if the Commissioners adopted Ranked-Choice Voting. Early on, it was clear OneAmerica and several outside political action groups were using this case to undo basic voting practices in Washington State.

Ranked-Choice Voting is an “alternative” voting tool powered by outside political action groups to dispel the standard two-party system. It requires voters to rank a long list of candidates by preference on their ballots and it eliminates primary elections, which allow voters an opportunity to evaluate candidates before the general election.

In 2008, voters in Pierce County had a brief experience with Ranked-Choice Voting. After two elections, it was repealed by a vote of the people. Ranked-Choice Voting was found to be confusing, costly, and complicated.

The Commissioners feared a Ranked-Choice Voting system in Yakima County would discourage people from voting and cause more voters to be disenfranchised. Ranked-Choice Voting can distort election outcomes because it forces people to cast votes for a list of candidates they do not support. Voters in Yakima County should not be forced to cast a vote for anyone who is not their first choice. The Commissioners made sure that this scheme was not successful in Yakima County.

Indeed, Commissioners Amanda McKinney, LaDon Linde, and Ron Anderson, with the assistance of attorneys Francis Floyd and Brittany Ward, are proud to have successfully brokered a settlement that defeated any notion of Ranked-Choice Voting in Yakima County. As part of the settlement, a new districting plan was drawn that enhances Latino voting power in compliance with Washington’s 2018 Voting Rights Act. Of the three new districts, one district ensures that Latinos will hold the majority voting power by the November 2022 general election.

Importantly, the settlement gives Yakima County protection for four years from similar lawsuits targeting its voting system. According to Mr. Floyd, “the Commissioners were steadfast that Ranked-Choice Voting would not be forced on voters in Yakima County and with this settlement they were able to prevent that from happening.”

The settlement is a win for the County because it serves the best interests of voters in Yakima County and Washington.

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