



June 3, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mayor Johnson and Dallas City Council Members
1500 Marilla Street
Dallas, Texas 75201

Re: Support for Charter Amendment No. 6 and Modifications to Municipal Election Timing

Dear Mayor Johnson and Councilmembers:

The undersigned City of Dallas organizations, businesses, and residents all support moving municipal elections from May of odd-numbered years to November of odd-numbered years. While this proposal narrowly failed at the City Charter Commission, we believe that overwhelming public support for this proposed amendment justifies its inclusion on the November ballot, where we are confident a stand-alone amendment will be approved by the voters and would save the City nearly \$500,000.00. As a result, we support and endorse Councilmember West's proposed Amendment No. 6. We also recognize that extending term length is a priority for the City Council and, as a result, alternatively support it being added to the ballot along with synchronizing term length to an even four-year term elected in November of odd-numbered years (proposed Amendment No. 7).

All of us have taken a prominent role in encouraging voter turnout in important local elections such as City Council, ISD Trustee, and Community College Trustee races, and propositions including the current 2024 Bond Election and previous ISD and Dallas College Bond Elections. Each year, groups like the North Dallas Chamber, Dallas Black Chamber, League of Women Voters of Dallas, Dallas Breakfast Group, Friends of the Dallas Public Library, Engage Dallas, and others host multiple candidate forums and engage in extensive voting promotion in person, via social media, and at voting locations for these important races. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of our organizations and other like-minded civic groups, voter turnout in May elections has been exceptionally low. This is because there are too many elections in Dallas and when Dallas residents turn out to vote, they tend to do it in November.

Historical data in Dallas County (where most of the City of Dallas residents vote) reflects that voters are more likely to participate in a November election instead of a May one. In 2023, in the most recent November Constitutional Amendment election, a total of 169,386 voters



participated out of an eligible number of 1,412,235, for a turnout of 11.99%. In the May 2023 Joint and Special Election, Dallas County participating voters numbered 114,474 out of an eligible 1,291,448, reflecting a turnout of 8.86%. The disparity was even more extreme in 2022, when in November, 632,674 residents voted out of an eligible 1,422,849, for a turnout of 44.47%. On the contrary, in May, 91,957 out of 1,395,231 registered voters (6.6%) participated in the municipal elections. These trends consistently repeat themselves when comparing May and November elections in earlier years as well.

The current voting model is challenging for many voters, with partisan primaries stacked on top of municipal elections, and run-off elections layered in. Multiple elections scattered throughout the year at oddly placed times can cause voter fatigue, reducing voter participation – which makes the process less inclusive. Moreover, voters are more accustomed to going to the polls in November, and we believe turnout for municipal elections will increase if the City Charter is amended to adjust the voting schedule. The simplest way to increase voter turnout is to consolidate the overall number of elections.

In addition to increasing voter turnout through election consolidation, there is an economic benefit to the switch as well. The applicable governing authorities pay Dallas County to administer their elections. If the municipal election is moved to November, it will be significantly less expensive for the County to administrate. As estimated by the Dallas City Secretary, a May election costs the City of Dallas \$990,421.34 to administrate, whereas a November election costs \$558,592.48. With so many municipal needs identified through the recently completed bond allocations, having an extra \$431,828.86 every year could go a long way toward supporting other City needs like parks, arts, libraries, public safety, or economic development. Even if voting data reflected equal turnout between May and November, the City would save money by making the switch.

We recognize that there is some traction among City Councilmembers to support an increase in term length from 2 years to something longer. Because of this, while we fully support Amendment No. 6 on its own, an alternative is to combine the two proposals with a consolidated switch from 2-year terms elected in May of odd-years to *4-year terms elected in November of odd-years*. This group would advocate in favor of such a proposal and believe both could be passed in tandem.

If the City Council opts not to include Amendment No. 6 on this year's November ballot despite overwhelming community support for its inclusion, we are prepared to obtain the 20,000 signatures necessary to require its inclusion on a future ballot pursuant to Texas Local Government Code Section 9.004. Of course, our preference is to save this time and expense and instead permit the City's voters to have the final choice on when to hold these important



municipal elections. We are confident that if presented with this on a future ballot, the electorate will approve Amendment No. 6.

Should you have any questions, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Other Supporting Organizations/City of Dallas Residents:

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| Stephen Angelette | Rabbi Nancy Kasten |
| Lauren Blitzer | Jeff Kitner |
| Camila Correa Bourdeau | Robin Lederer |
| Stacy D. Brown Counseling and Consulting | Ken Malcolmson |
| J. Eric Cedillo | Jeff Mankoff |
| Ron Chapman, Jr. | Rev. George Mason |
| Robert Elkin | Patricia A. Murphy |
| Sarah Evans | Joel Schwitzer |
| Jeana Foxman | Mike Sims |
| David de la Fuente | Laura Walters |
| Scott Goldstein | |