



Common Cause
New Mexico



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, June 17th, 2024

Contact

Molly Taylor, CVNM Chief Operating Officer, molly@cvnm.org or 505.554.4115

Mason Graham, Policy Director, mgraham@commoncause.org or 505.417.4012

Groups Issue Statements Following Albuquerque City Council Decision to Advance Anti-Democracy Proposal to Ballot

ALBUQUERQUE - Today, the Albuquerque City Council voted 6-3 to advance a controversial charter amendment to the ballot in the 2024 General Election. Council Bill P-24-1, sponsored by Councilors Lewis and Peña, would originally lower the threshold to be elected mayor or city councilor from the current 50 percent of the vote to 40 percent. During the meeting, the City Council voted 6-3 to amend the proposal further, moving the enactment date to 2026, eliminating the voting threshold altogether and only permitting runoffs if two leading candidates tie. Removing voting thresholds creates scenarios that would allow a Mayor or City Councilor to win an election with any number of votes (even as low as 10%), and would allow special interests to have vastly more influence in city elections. As a result, the more fringe candidates that run, backed by special interests, the fewer the votes that will be needed to be elected to city government.

The vote took place following three public comment hearings in which community leaders and advocates consistently spoke out against the measures, urging the city council to allow more time for public comment and engagement, consider alternative election structures, and not dilute the city's democracy. At a time when election integrity and access is being eroded across the country, community leaders also urged the Council to strengthen the city's voting process, not weaken it. Groups also expressed appreciation to City Councilors Fiebelkorn, Baca, and Rogers for voting in opposition to the proposal, and speaking up for communities and voters during the hearing.

In response to the vote, several election reform and community groups issued the following statements:

"We are deeply disappointed that the Albuquerque City Council voted tonight to advance a proposal that will weaken the city's democracy. Albuquerque voters decided over a decade ago to uphold strong election standards with a 50 percent threshold for mayoral and city council elections. This is especially important because these seats do not have a primary election process. A 50 percent

threshold ensures that the candidates that step into office have a majority of voters behind them. This system is working, and the City Council's decision to remove all thresholds guts the election integrity of the city's most important elected positions. This is part of a nationwide trend to dismantle voting access, erode election transparency, and weaken our democratic process. We thank City Councilors Fiebelkorn, Baca, and Rogers for voting against this anti-democratic measure and introducing legislation to hold a more robust, dedicated process." - **John Martinez, Conservation Voters New Mexico (CVNM) Campaigns and Civic Engagement Director**

"Just when we thought the city council could go no further to undermine democratic elections—last night, they did. The City Council's decision to pass P-1 as amended will place a radical change to city elections on the ballot this November about the way the mayor and councilors are elected. A majority would no longer be required to be elected, but the candidate with the most votes would automatically win. This means that in a multi-candidate field, a candidate with as little as 18% of the vote could win the office immediately. That's a dangerous precedent which would open the door to fringe candidates and others who do not even have a semblance of a mandate. Those elected would lack credibility and legitimacy. The council's action also favors sitting officials who will now require much fewer votes to win, giving further advantage to incumbents. Common Cause is opposed to this kind of voter suppression, which will protect a small minority at the expense of the will of the majority" - **Mason Graham, Policy Director, Common Cause New Mexico**

"It is incredibly disappointing to see the Albuquerque City Council's vote to pass a proposal for a new ballot measure that will remove the vote threshold and do away with runoff elections for mayor and council elections completely unless a tie occurs. This, after voting down an ordinance to implement ranked choice voting earlier this month, solidifies their counterintuitive and anti-democratic stances. If the Council truly wanted to avoid runoff elections, implementing ranked choice voting would have been the most democratic option. We commend the councilors who stood for democracy tonight and voted no." - **Jessie Sanchez, a spokeswoman for the Center for Civic Policy.**

"The hard working people of our city have a laundry list of policies in order to ensure that all people have what they need to thrive, and the Albuquerque city council instead created an imaginary problem in order to disrupt democracy and ignore the will of voters. We are deeply disappointed in the majority of this council and will work to ensure the people of our city are heard in November." - **Andrea J. Serrano, Executive Director, OLÉ**

"Eliminating majority rule is unacceptable in a democracy. Those who hold these seats should not be deciding how they are elected, it is unethical by immense measures. The councilors have opened the door to extreme minority rule by endorsing Proposal 1, which flies in the face of our democratic principles, regardless of party affiliation. The people of this country and the city of Albuquerque can be counted upon to defend their constitutional right for fair representation and we look forward to the vote of the people to settle this matter in November." - **Sila Avcil, Executive Director, NM Voters First**

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