

## RON NIRENBERG OFFICE OF CITY COUNCILMAN DISTRICT 8

October 5, 2015

Dear Charter Commission Members:

Thank you for your efforts to modernize San Antonio's City Charter. Voters approved all of your recommendations by wide margins, a testament to your leadership and foresight.

While state law prevents us from proposing additional charter amendments before May 2017, we should continue to examine proposals that will ensure that San Antonians stay engaged and well governed. To that end, I hope you will consider a charter amendment proposal that would move the City's nonpartisan municipal elections to November of even-numbered years.

Civic disengagement is the most pressing challenge facing our nation, and its impact in San Antonio is felt acutely in everything we do: from adopting an annual budget to building the SA Tomorrow comprehensive plan, from addressing gentrification to debating new modes of transportation for the future. Each of these efforts would be far more fruitful with greater public participation. That participation begins and ends with voting.

The numbers are bleak. The May 9, 2015 general election—on a ballot that contained a mayoral race and six ballot propositions—drew only 12% of registered voters. This number is not an anomaly, but indicative of a larger trend. A core tenant of representative democracy is that legitimacy is borne by participation. Higher turnout will yield a more effective, responsive City Hall. The City of Austin recently switched its municipal elections from May to November, yielding an increase in voter participation from 10.7% to 40.4%.

A vote cast is an investment in our future. Let's ensure greater participation in municipal elections by scheduling them to coincide with other November elections.

There are several challenges associated with transitioning from a May ballot to a nonpartisan November ballot, including an amendment to the Texas Election Code. I trust that the Commission will consider the options and recommend the most orderly and least costly path forward.

Thank you for your leadership and your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely

Ron Nirenberg, Councilman

District 8