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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92521

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in regard to my testimony on behalf of the New York Voting Rights Act. I am an associate professor of political science at the University of California, Riverside, where I teach and research American politics, race and ethnic politics, and voting rights. Along with my co-author Sean Long, I recently published the article, "Can States Promote Minority Representation? Assessing the Effects of the California Voting Rights Act," in the peer reviewed journal *Urban Affairs Review (UAR)*. *UAR* is the top field journal for the study of city and urban politics.

This paper is the first to test the political effects (i.e., representation) of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA). The CVRA, which became law in 2002, sought to broaden representation in largely White-controlled city councils state-wide by incentivizing cities to shift council electoral jurisdictions from at-large to single-member districts. Even though California's political image is that of a progressive multi-cultural polity, not dissimilar from New York, minorities are drastically under-represented at the local level in large swaths of the state. On the whole, minorities in the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino, collectively over 4 million people), the Central Valley (e.g. Kern and San Joaquin County), and interior north, are still descriptively under-represented at the local level. For instance, in 2018, Latinos composed 54% of Kern County (Bakersfield), but had just one Latina on the County Board of Supervisors.

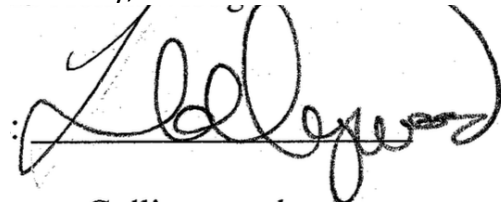
To test whether the CVRA produced more minority representatives, my colleague and I gathered data on the race of city council members in the 30 cities that had switched

from at-large to single member district as a result of the CVRA.¹ Next, for each city that switched, we used a statistical procedure to locate a similarly situated city (pair) that had not yet switched from at-large to district elections. We then compared the change in White (minority) representation after cities fully switched from at-large to district.

Employing a variety of statistical techniques and analyses, our results show that cities that were forced to or elected to switch from at-large to single member districts as a result of the CVRA increased minority representation at the city level by roughly 10-12% overall, and specifically 21% among cities with high shares of Latinos. This equates to 0.5 of a city council seat overall, and 1 city council seat among high density Latino cities. Thus, even in a fairly progressive Democratic state, the CVRA has helped produce more racially representative local governments. Because the proposed NYVRA is even stronger than the CVRA, the best available science suggests that NY minorities will have a significantly easier time electing preferred candidates post NYVRA passage.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at loren.collingwood@ucr.edu, or via phone at 202-744-4060.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Loren Collingwood', written over a horizontal line.

Loren Collingwood
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¹ As of the 2019 general election. Many cities are slated to complete full council election under single member district system in the 2020 general election.

References

Collingwood, Loren and Sean Long. 2019. Can States Promote Minority Representation? Assessing the Effects of the California Voting Rights Act. *Urban Affairs Review*: 1-32.
DOI: 10.177/107807419896854 .