



## GOING FROM AN “AT LARGE” TO A “BY-TRUSTEE AREA” ELECTIONS

### BACKGROUND:

Paso Robles Joint Unified School District is transitioning from at-large elections to by-trustee area elections. Beginning in November 2022, residents will vote for a single Board of Trustee candidate residing in their newly drawn trustee area. The public is invited to provide input on the district formation mapping during public hearings. On April 25, 2021, the Board affirmed the process of converting the method by which Board members are elected. Under the current "at-large" system, all registered voters within the District's boundaries vote for any candidate for all Board member seats. Under the new proposed system, candidates will be elected by "trustee areas." This means only voters within a given trustee area can vote for candidates who reside within that same area. The intent of this proposed system is to offer greater opportunities for Board representation by candidates who might not otherwise be elected under an at-large system. The second public hearing is May 11, 2021, during the Board of Education meeting.

### WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

The Paso Robles Joint Unified School District (PRJUSD) received a letter asserting that its at-large election system (i.e., all district voters vote for all Board seats) to elect PRJUSD Board members illegally creates racially polarized voting and demanded that PRJUSD convert to the by-trustee-area election system (i.e., voters within a defined trustee area vote for only one Board candidate who lives in that trustee area) in time for the November 2022 election.

### WHAT IS THE CVRA?

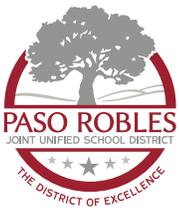
The California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) prohibits the use of an election system "that impairs the ability of a protected class to elect candidates of its choice or its ability to influence the outcome of an election." Elected entities can be sued if their election systems result in racially polarized voting. If a court finds against an elected entity, the elected entity must change its election system and pay substantial attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “AT LARGE” AND “BY-TRUSTEE AREA” ELECTIONS?

PRJUSD currently has an "at-large" election system where voters of the entire city elect all members of the School Board. A "by-trustee area" election system will carve PRJUSD's district into seven (7) "by-trustee areas." Voters in each "by-trustee area" will choose their School Board representative, who must also live in that "by-trustee area."

### HOW HAVE OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS RESPONDED TO THE LITIGATION UNDER THE CVRA?

Many school districts have changed their election method voluntarily or by court order. Entities that have attempted to defend their at-large election systems have incurred significant legal costs. For example: Palmdale - \$4.7 million, Modesto - \$3 million, Anaheim - \$1.1 million, Santa Barbara - \$600,000, and West Covina - \$220,000.



## HOW WILL TRANSITIONING TO A “BY-TRUSTEE AREA” ELECTION SYSTEM AFFECT ME ?

If approved, registered voters in the school district's boundaries will have the opportunity to vote for a candidate for School Board who lives in their "by-trustee area." Registered voters will not be able to vote for School Board candidates from "by-trustee areas" in which they do not reside. How many "by-trustee areas" will be considered? The Board will be considering a map that includes seven (7) "by-trustee areas"— one (1) for each Board member seat.

## HOW CAN I HELP SHAPE THE “BY-TRUSTEE AREAS”?

The Board is conducting public hearings to receive community feedback on the proposed "by-trustee areas." Two public hearings will be held before the release of draft maps, and at these hearings, residents will be asked to provide input on potential "communities of interest" to follow when shaping draft "by-trustee area" maps. There will be three additional public hearings at subsequent School Board meetings.

## WHAT DRAFT MAPS WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD?

The Board will consider one or more draft maps prepared by a professional demographer.

## WHEN ARE THE PUBLIC HEARING MEETINGS? (DURING OUR BOARD MEETINGS)

<b>Tuesday, April 27, 6 p.m. (pre-map)</b>	<b>Tuesday, May 11, 6 p.m. (pre-map)</b>
<b>Tuesday, May 25, 6 p.m. (post-map)</b>	<b>Tuesday, June 8, 6 p.m. (post-map)</b>
<b>Tuesday, June 22, 6 p.m. (post-map)</b>	