

Results of CVRA Demographer Analysis

The City Council recently commissioned a study to identify whether polarized voting occurs in Fort Bragg, and whether those voting patterns lead to a violation of the rights of Latino residents in the City under the California Voting Rights Act. We are happy to report that the conclusion is that there is no evidence of any violation.

First, it must be emphasized that the results generated from the standard polarized voting analysis methods have extreme margins of error in jurisdictions as small as Fort Bragg. A traditional polarized voting analysis is based on 40, 80 or even hundreds of precincts. A traditional polarized voting study looks at the demographics of the voters in each precinct and measures whether there is a clear connection between the demographics of the precincts and the votes in those precincts for different candidates. Obviously every election and every candidate have unique characteristics and voting influences: for example, candidates often do very well in the precinct where they live. But with 40, 80 or hundreds of precincts those unique elements are limited to only a few precincts and overall patterns are typically evident.

But in a small jurisdiction like Fort Bragg we have only 17 precincts reporting. Unique factors such as which of the five candidates live in a given precinct thus exert a significant influence on the results. So while the results are statistically unreliable due to the limited data available, what data is available appears to indicate that both winners in 2016 were supported by Latino voters and two of the three winners in 2014 were supported by Latino voters.

Unfortunately, only one Latino has chosen to run for city council in the last decade. We believe that is more the result of Latinos relatively small numbers in the City (less than 15 percent of the Citizens of Voting Age in the City), and not the result of the City's at-large voting. And changing to by-district elections would take away the right of City voters – Latino and non-Latino alike – to have a say in electing all five members who make decisions for the City, rather than being limited to voting on only one of the five Councilmembers whose votes govern Fort Bragg.

The Council joins all of the City's residents in remaining dedicated to providing leadership and service to every resident of the City, regardless of race, language, or neighborhood. We continue to take pride in the open, accessible City government that continues to be responsive to every resident of the city regardless of race, age or political persuasion.