



### **2018 Voting Rights Act Public Listening Sessions**

**WHO:** Mount Vernon citizens—especially those within the Hispanic/Latino community

**WHAT:** An invitation to attend one, or both, public information and feedback sessions

**WHEN:** Meeting 1 is at 7pm on Tuesday September 11<sup>th</sup> (SVC)  
Meeting 2 is at 6pm on Thursday September 13<sup>th</sup> (MV Public Library)

**WHY:** To explain the 2018 Washington State Voting Rights Act, and to invite public feedback on its potential impacts to the voting process in the City of Mount Vernon

**WHERE:** Skagit Valley College Multi-Purpose Room (7pm, 9/11)  
Mount Vernon Public Library (6pm, 9/13)

---

Washington State legislators are requiring the City of Mount Vernon (and all other cities, counties and jurisdictions) to reconsider their voting process.

The Washington State Voting Rights Act of 2018, attempts to address any election system that might unintentionally dilute the votes of members of a protected class, resulting in an unequal opportunity for those protected class voting citizens to elect candidates of their choice.

In the City of Mount Vernon, our population is roughly 70% White, with a mix of approximately 30% Hispanic/Latino residents. As such, our Hispanic/Latino residents are considered a “protected class,” by federal definition; and because of the new State Voting Rights Act, the City is taking a new look at our voting process by inviting the public—especially those within this protected class—to attend one or both upcoming public information and listening sessions.

--MORE--

On Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Mount Vernon Voting Rights Act Study Committee will be hosting a 7pm listening session in the Multi-Purpose Room at Skagit Valley College. And again on Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, at the Mount Vernon Public Library.

The purpose of these two sessions is twofold; one purpose is to provide information on how our current voting process works, and what the 2018 Voting Rights Act requires of us. The second intent of the meeting is to allow the audience to respond with input on how adequately they feel that our existing process provides them with representation, and a “voice.”

**More Detail:** The City of Mount Vernon city limits is divided geographically into 3 wards. 2 council members are elected from each ward. One council member is elected ‘at-large’ for a total of 7 council members. In our current election process, when a council member is chosen to represent a ward, that candidate runs in the general election in November. During the general election, the entire voting population of Mount Vernon votes on the candidates from every ward.

Keeping in mind that the protected class (Hispanic/Latino) is out-numbered by more than 2-1 in our City, the 2018 Voting Rights Act attempts to address what it describes as a “dilution” of votes which can limit the rights of a protected class when an at-large vote is held, resulting in an unequal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

One solution that other cities in the State have implemented in response to the Act is moving their election process from “at-large” voting—where the entire voting population votes on council members; to “ward-based” voting—where each ward votes on which council members will represent their respective ward.

As the City opens the process of public input, the Committee is concurrently investigating with detail the City of Mount Vernon’s demographics to ensure that members of our protected class have equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

--END--