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March 17, 2015

The Honorable Roger Hernández
California State Assembly
State Capitol Building, Room 5016
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 278 (Hernández). District-based municipal elections (as introduced)
Notice of Opposition**

Dear Assembly Member Hernández,

The League of California Cities regrets that it must OPPOSE Assembly Bill 278, which *requires* that all cities with populations over 100,000 adopt an ordinance to switch to district-based elections.

This measure is **a sweeping and costly unfunded state mandate**. Impacted cities would have to hire consultants to draft maps and analyze election patterns—with costs ranging \$50,000 to \$100,000 per city to draw various maps. Attorneys with specialized expertise in the federal and state election laws would need to be retained to advise and protect cities from litigation over how district lines are drawn.

Additionally, the bill is based around an arbitrary population threshold and does not take into account that the affected cities all have unique population and geographic characteristics. In the event there is an issue of vote dilution, the CVRA provides significant legal leverage to any voter who seeks to challenge an at-large election system of a city, school district, community college district or any other district authorized by the state. In fact, under the CVRA it is easier for plaintiffs to bring and prevail in lawsuits alleging that their votes are diluted in at-large elections.

In short, for those who prefer existing at-large election systems to be closely examined for conformance with the CVRA, existing law is robust and working. **New mandates are unnecessary.**

For the reasons stated above, we oppose this legislation. If you have any questions, or if I can be of any assistance, please call me at (916) 658-8254.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alicia Lewis".

Alicia Lewis
Legislative Representative

CC: Chair and Members, Assembly Elections and Redistricting Committee
Chair and Members, Assembly Local Government Committee