



NEWS RELEASE
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STATEMENT OF CITY ATTORNEY JOHN RUSSO IN SUPPORT OF INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING

I have supported Instant Runoff Voting since I was an Oakland City Council member. From the time IRV was first debated in 1996, through the time I authored Charter changes in 2000, I have always felt that IRV was a critical antidote to the disease called negative campaigning. Nearly six years have gone by since Oakland voters told us that we should move promptly to an IRV system. Yet, Oakland has still failed to make the change.

There is always an excuse not to make the change; there aren't enough funds; people won't understand how IRV works; the technology can't handle IRV. These excuses are bogus—every one of them. They are the wheezings of a status quo that is diseased and refuses to take its medicine.

In the last decade California elections have sunk deeper and deeper into the gutter. The amount of unsubstantiated character assassination in this past month's election was unprecedented in its scope and dishonesty. Negative campaigning continues because, as political consultants will tell you, negative campaigning works.

People are fed up. It's no accident that four out of five people who were eligible to vote in this month's primary election refused to participate. Negative campaigning is killing democracy. IRV is an essential first step on the road back to a healthy democracy.

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