

# Modesto Bee

Previous Story

Next Story

ATTACHMENT 6

## Turlock weighs hiring consultant to propose district boundaries

By John Holland

[jholland@modbee.com](mailto:jholland@modbee.com) April 21, 2014

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)

- HOW TO ATTEND

**What:** Turlock City Council

**When:** 6 p.m. today

**Where:** City Hall, 156 S. Broadway

**Agenda:** [www.turlock.ca.us](http://www.turlock.ca.us)

**TURLOCK** — The City Council will talk Tuesday about switching to district elections, an issue that incurred a \$3 million legal bill for Modesto a few years back.

Turlock is among the many entities around the state that are looking to change from at-large elections, which critics say do not provide enough representation to Latinos.

Tuesday night, the council will consider having a consultant draw proposed district boundaries, which could return for discussion next month. The final map could go before voters in November and would take effect with ensuing council elections.

The process could cost up to \$60,000, City Manager Roy Wasden said last month.

Turlock would be the second city in Stanislaus County to go to districts. The first was Modesto, which did so in 2008 after a legal battle that went to the U.S. Supreme Court and ended with a \$3 million settlement with attorneys for the three Latino residents who had sued.

Modesto had argued that the California Voting Rights Act of 2002, which the plaintiffs used to push for districts, was unconstitutional because it appeared to give preference to certain races. The high court declined in 2007 to hear the city's petition. The next year, Modesto voters approved a ballot measure that phased out the at-large system.

A little of this history is in a slide presentation by National Demographics Corp., a Glendale-based firm that is advising Turlock on district elections. It was shown at four lightly attended meetings around town last month.

The firm noted that 41 of California's 482 cities have adopted districts, as have about 120 governing bodies for schools, water and other services. Four other Stanislaus County cities – Ceres, Riverbank, Newman and Waterford – are considering districts. The Turlock Unified School District, which takes in large expanses of farmland as well as the city of Turlock, has switched.

In most cities, district elections mean that the residents of one part of town vote only for candidates from that same area. A few allow voters citywide to choose someone in each district. The mayor continues to represent the whole city, whether elected by voters or appointed by the council.

“Every city has different history, people, neighborhoods and issues,” according to part of the slide presentation. “There is no one right answer that any can provide. Experts can provide context and information but, ultimately, it is the community that must decide what is right for itself.”

The firm noted that 36 percent of Turlock’s residents are Latino, according to the 2010 census. In the November 2012 election, they made up 25 percent of the registered voters and 21 percent of the turnout.

The firm said that for California, in general, a switch to district elections has led to an increasing number of Latino elected officials, but fewer black officials. It also said districts tend to reduce campaign costs and bring more neighborhood issues before city councils.

Tuesday’s agenda includes discussion of a proposed sales tax increase for city road projects, which also could be placed on the November ballot at a later meeting. The idea of a city-only increase has returned now that a countywide proposal for half a percentage point has fallen through.

Bee staff writer John Holland can be reached at [jholland@modbee.com](mailto:jholland@modbee.com) or (209) 578-2385.

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)

## Join The Conversation

Modesto Bee is pleased to provide this opportunity to share information, experiences and observations about what’s in the news. Some of the comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the newspaper. We encourage lively, open debate on the issues of the day, and ask that you refrain from profanity, hate speech, personal comments and remarks that are off point. Thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts.

[Commenting FAQs](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

### Today’s Circulars

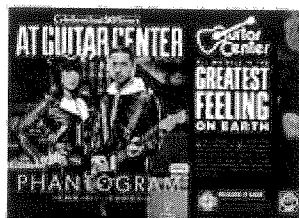


**PETSMART USA**  
VALID UNTIL JUN 01

[View All Circulars](#)



**JCPENNEY**  
JUST RELEASED



**GUITAR CENTER**  
VALID UNTIL MAY 31



**BIG 5 SPORTING GOODS**  
3 DAYS LEFT