



CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Proposal to Increase Number of City Council Districts

Albuquerque City Councilor Isaac Benton introduced legislation at Monday's Council meeting that will initiate a public hearing process on a proposed charter amendment to increase the number of Council districts from 9 to 13.

"The recent redistricting process and the resulting district map raised many concerns regarding dilution of voting strength, particularly among minorities," explained Benton. "When we factor in continuing population growth, increasing the number of council districts to maintain adequate representation is a sound proposal for voters to consider."

Albuquerque's population has more than doubled since the nine Council districts were established in 1974, growing from approximately 260,000 to 545,852 in 2010. "More councilors equal better services and representation for residents and brings us back to a more direct democracy," Benton noted. "When you look at other cities of comparable population, Albuquerque is on the lower end of the spectrum as far as number of districts."

The City's population grew by 100,000 between 2000 and 2010 and is expected to grow by the same amount over the next 10 years. That increase would likely again be in westside districts that have absorbed most of the growth in the last decade. Thirteen districts would spread out the imbalance, providing better democratic representation toward the end of the decade.

According to Benton, additional districts would also serve to restore the voting strength of minorities and address concerns over the large size of the new District 2 and its disproportionate level of need with respect to infrastructure, redevelopment, and revitalization.

A charter amendment must be approved by the voters, and two public hearings are required prior to Council voting on whether to put the amendment on the ballot. "Last year, the City asked voters to weigh in on whether to continue the red light camera program. The issue of adequate democratic representation is arguably much more important, and I think it's a question that should be put to the voters," stated Benton.

Councilor Benton has requested a fiscal impact analysis, to be completed before Council acts on the bill on August 6.