



Kriss Worthington

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CONSENT CALENDAR

March 14, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington, Councilmember Ben Bartlett, and Councilmember Cheryl Davila
 Subject: Non-Citizen Voting in Berkeley Elections Refer to Peace and Justice Commission

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the Peace and Justice Commission to consider preparation of an amendment to the Berkeley City Charter to be presented to the voters in Berkeley that would allow a non-citizen resident the right to vote in Berkeley city elections.

BACKGROUND

For the most part of American history, from 1776 to early 1920s, alien universal suffrage was granted in 40 states. In many cases, non-citizens could vote in local, state, and even federal elections, as well as hold public office. Yet, waves of anti-immigrant sentiment from the late 19th century and World War I through 1926 led to the rollback of these practices. New York City was the first place to restore immigrant voting in 1969 for school board elections, and towns in Maryland granted non-citizens voting rights in all local elections during the 1990s, including in Takoma Park, Barnsville, Garret Park, Glen Echo, Martin Additions, Chevy Chase Section Three, Somerset, Hyattsville and, most recently, in Mount Rainier. Chicago has allowed noncitizen parents to vote in local school council elections since 1988. San Francisco granted noncitizen parents voting rights in school board elections on November 8th 2016. Today, eleven jurisdictions across the United States have extended voting rights to non-citizens, with more awaiting state approval, including four towns in Massachusetts (Cambridge, Brookline, Amherst and Newton). Several other jurisdictions have recently sought to restore immigrant voting, including New York City, Burlington VT, Portland ME, and Washington D.C.

Berkeley should follow this path, especially given the diverse number of nationalities the city represents. Since California's State Constitution does not forbid non-citizen voting in elections, as a Charter City, the City of Berkeley could take action in becoming the next city granting alien voting rights in all local elections. The United States immigrant population has been expanding, and it currently represents 20% of California's population. By permitting non-citizens to vote in local elections, Berkeley will resurrect the long tradition of non-citizen voting that has been a part of this country's history since its founding, and will provide a more inclusive atmosphere for all its residents.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Minimal.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Consistent with environmental goals

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MORE INFORMATION

1. [San Francisco](#) (Adopted 2016)
2. [Chicago](#) (Since 1988)
3. [Hyattsville City](#) (Adopted 2016)
4. [Mount Rainier](#)
5. [Somerset City](#)
6. [Takoma Park City](#)
7. [Garret Park City](#)
8. [Barnesville](#)
9. [Glen Echo City](#)
10. [Martin Additions](#)