

Proposal No. 1 – District Voting: Changing the Composition of the Maui County Council to Nine Single Member Districts and Creating a Decennial Apportionment Commission

Rationale. Nine Single Member Districts follow the state-wide trend currently in use in Honolulu and the Big Island. Single Member Districts would allow lower electioneering costs, better accountability of council members to voters, and permits every area of the county to have a population-proportionate influence in the election of the council.

This proposal appeared at the first Charter Commission of 1963-1964. This occurred before the series of U.S. Supreme Court cases that required equally proportionate electoral districts and was eventually dismissed with the belief that the Democratic and Republican parties could adequately represent the diversity of viewpoints of individual voters. There was also concern that the Board of Supervisors and the State Legislature would not accept district voting.

In 1967, the Second Charter Commission also considered district voting but the objection came from the idea that the island of Lanai, with approximately 900 voters, must have their own individual representative and the decennial apportionment was cumbersome. Others argued that Kihei, with 450 voters, must have their own individual representative and the number of council members would be too much. The Maui Chamber of Commerce criticized the system of residency areas with at-large election as: “The present compromise systems in Maui County ... are illogical and undesirable.” (Minutes of August 1, 1966). Residents of Lahaina criticized the system: “I feel there should be representatives from each district instead of the Island of Molokai where they are elected at large. We don't have the true representation of that district. Same with the Island of Lanai... I know enough about the district of Lahaina that I feel a representative from this district should be a member on the Board of Supervisors or council, or whatever you call it.” (Minutes of August 2, 1966) On Molokai, Eligio Ocampo of the Molokai Filipino Council and Kapaakea Homesteader

Association stated: “It's the feeling of my people that the councilmen elected at large is not a very good idea for Molokai.” (Minutes of September 16, 1966) Forty five people at that meeting on Molokai endorsed that view, while one person registered his uncertainty about it. No one on Molokai opposed district voting.

In 1976, the Third Charter Commission considered again single member district voting and its interrelationship with party primaries or the idea of non-partisan elections. The alternative of both single member districts and at-large district together was proposed.

In 1992, the Fifth Charter Commission considered again the composition of the council and considered single member districts. However, the commission recommended and the voters adopted, nine at-large districts with the present residency area requirements.

In 2002, the Sixth Charter Commission briefly considered single member district voting but focused much more attention on increased participation of communities in the planning process.