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Councilmember

Office of the City Council

Ocotillo District

*WE MUST DEMAND BETTER OF COUNTY OFFICIALS IN CHARGE OF ELECTIONS*

The responsibility to vote and participate in the selection process of our elected leaders is one of the most sacred and important responsibilities we have as citizens. Even more important is the responsibility of government to ensure complete and total legitimacy in the processes of citizens voting, votes being gathered, and votes being counted. I am disappointed to report that once again the government and in particular, the Maricopa County Elections Department has failed to uphold their responsibilities, which has led to the disenfranchisement of some voters in the Ocotillo District and other parts of Glendale.

On the morning of Tuesday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, I had several constituents contact me to report that they showed up to their designated precinct to vote, however there was no identifiable polling location or anyone there to provide additional information to voters on what to do or where to go. I immediately attempted to contact the authorities to find out what was going on and to get the precinct open for voting. Eventually poll workers showed-up after the polls should have opened. I had several citizens complain that they were unable to vote that day because the only time they had available to vote was in the early morning before work and other obligations. With the polling location not opened at that time, these caring and committed citizens lost their voice in the process.

Secondly, as was reported in the media, a precinct in Glendale closed its polling location after voting hours ended and workers left for the night, failing to turn in the votes that had been cast that day along with a memory device containing the numerical vote count. The ballots sat overnight in a school unwatched, unaccounted for and out of the custody of Maricopa County officials. This chain of events only adds to the lack of trust in our election system. It is even more unfortunate that these continual errors occur in areas of the city which are already identified as low income and underserved.

The City of Glendale has budgeted nearly \$128,000 for the cost of elections in FY2016-2017. We contract with Maricopa County to run our municipal elections, similar to every other jurisdiction in the valley. We pay them to conduct the election on our behalf with full preparation and professionalism. There was a there was a failure to communicate, a failure to plan, prepare and train and there was a failure to ensure citizens that their vote would be allowed, gathered appropriately and counted. The integrity of the election process was violated and the opportunity for some citizens to cast a vote was prevented by the actions of the Maricopa County Elections Department. I feel the lack of customer service from the Maricopa County Elections Department is unacceptable and the lack of communication to the City of Glendale when these discrepancies occurred should not be tolerated.

For all of the candidates who work extremely hard during their campaigns we must demand better. I have asked our City Clerk's office, which contracts with Maricopa County to run our elections, to investigate what occurred and to report back to me and the public on why it happened and what is being done to make sure that those who could not vote have the opportunity to do so. We have to make sure there are safe guards in place to ensure these mistakes never happen again. We must also hold County election officials responsible just as we would any other contractor the city hires and pays with taxpayer funds. I am committing to the residents of the Ocotillo District and the entire City of Glendale that I will be working to make sure your voice in the elections process is heard. If you were unable to vote in this last election and would like to report it, please contact my office at 623-930-2249 or [jaldama@glendaleaz.com](mailto:jaldama@glendaleaz.com).

Councilmember Jamie Aldama

Ocotillo District, Glendale Arizona