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CITY OF PALMDALE NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: John Mlynar
PHONE: 661/267-5115
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Court Grants Palmdale's Appeal to Halt Parris/Shenkman Sideshow in Voting Rights Case

PALMDALE -- The Court of Appeal of the State of California Second Appellate District Division Five today granted the City of Palmdale its petition for a writ of supersedeas which puts a halt to the request by plaintiff's attorneys R. Rex Parris and Kevin Shenkman to show cause regarding contempt by the Palmdale City Council in the ongoing California Voting Rights Case.

The ruling was the unanimous decision of the three judges on the panel.

"This ruling puts an end to the political sideshow attempted by Parris and Shenkman and allows the City to pursue its legal right through the legitimate appeal process to ensure that its citizens have the right to vote for all their representatives," said Palmdale City Attorney Matthew Ditzhazy.

"Under the City's current voting structure, each voter may cast a vote for any of the candidates running for City Council including the Mayor," explained Ditzhazy. "Parris and Shenkman wish to impose a system on the residents of Palmdale that will reduce the power of their vote by 60 percent. We believe that our residents deserve more of a say than that."

The plaintiffs' original lawsuit, which was filed in 2013, argued that minority candidates were being kept off the Palmdale City Council because of an at large voting system. Ironically, in Nov. 2013, Fred Thompson, a retired community college dean who

formerly served on the Palmdale Planning Commission and Palmdale School District board, became the first African-American to win a City Council seat. Antonio Soza was the first Hispanic to be elected to the City Council, when he ran and won in 1978. He was then appointed vice mayor and served until 1982. Richard Loa was the second Hispanic elected to the City Council, when he ran and won in 2001. Loa served until 2005, when he was appointed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to serve on the California Board of Prison Terms.

The City of Palmdale appealed the December 23, 2013, Final Order by Judge Mark V. Mooney which permanently enjoined at-large elections, prematurely terminated the terms of the existing councilmembers, and ordered a district-based election on June 3, 2014. “Our appeal put all that on hold until the Court of Appeals can rule on it, which meant there was no Palmdale election in June and the current Council would continue until the appeal was heard,” Ditzhazy explained.

“The issues on appeal are currently being briefed and that process will continue into the early part of next year,” added Ditzhazy. “We expect that the Court of Appeal will hear oral arguments sometime by the middle of next year.”