

# Green light for city election in November

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A federal judge yesterday signed the court order approving Watsonville's district-election system, clearing the way for a Nov. 7 election.

Assuming the City Council votes to approve the election at its Tuesday night meeting, candidate filing will begin Thursday and end Aug. 31.

The order, signed by Judge William Ingram in San Jose, is the final step in the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund's four-year legal battle to force Watsonville to adopt a district system.

Since a court decision in favor of the district system in March, MALDEF and the city had been working out details of the new system. The last details were settled Tuesday.

MALDEF's suit charged that under Watsonville's at-large

election system, the voting power of Hispanics was diluted by the Anglo voting bloc.

Under the new system, two of the seven districts will be nearly 80 percent Hispanic.

County Clerk Richard Bedal, who oversees the county Elections Office, said yesterday his office had nearly finished drawing up voting precincts for the new districts.

The lists of voters will be fed into the Elections Office computer over the weekend, then be examined on Monday.

"We expect to find a few glitches on Monday," Bedal said.

But he said he expected his office would be able to give Watsonville City Clerk Lorraine Washington a list of voters for each precinct by the end of next week.

*Staff writer Katharine Ball also contributed to this report.*