

CF CABRILLO COLLEGE 1990 -

SEP 18 1992 R.P. P.15

dep p.15

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Cabrillo district voting plan sets out on road to approval

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Cabrillo College this week approved a redistricting plan that includes district elections, but it will take several months for the plan to wind through the various county, state and federal channels before it is actually implemented.

Since Cabrillo's district includes all of Santa Cruz County and extends into parts of San Benito and Monterey counties, all three county education offices must approve the plan before it goes to the state

Board of Education for review.

From there it travels to the U.S. Department of Justice, because Monterey County comes under the jurisdiction of Section Five of the federal Voting Rights Act. Section Five is designed to protect minority representation, and requires that any changes in voting procedures be reviewed and approved by the Justice Department.

The board's action on Monday was designed to kill two birds with one stone. First, district elections will make running for a seat on the Cabrillo board a less expen-

sive, less confusing endeavor, since candidates would need to mount a campaign only in their trustee area and not for the whole district. This would encourage a wider diversity of people to seek office, said Cabrillo board trustee Nancy Matlock. At-large elections favor incumbents and the wealthy, she said.

Board approval of the redistricting plan was also a preventive measure, Matlock said. By taking action now, the board will avoid any possible future confrontation with groups advocating district

elections. In recent years, Latino leaders across the state have mounted successful efforts to bring district elections to many city and county governments, including Watsonville, as well as numerous school districts.

In 1989, the city of Watsonville lost its case to keep at-large elections after spending several years and \$1 million in legal fees waging an unsuccessful legal battle.

Last week, the U.S. Department of Justice approved a redistricting plan for the Pajaro Valley school district, a plan that includes dis-

trict elections. Several members of the school board objected to this change.

Cabrillo's redistricting plan will not affect the November election, which will be conducted on an at-large basis. Four of the seven board seats are up for re-election.

In Area Four, the Scotts Valley area, Charles "Chuck" Berry is the lone candidate. John Boone, who now represents Area Four, has announced he will not seek re-election.

After more than 21 years on the Cabrillo board, Bridie Franich has

announced she will retire in November. She represents Area Five, the Watsonville area, in which Rebecca Garcia is running unopposed.

In Area Seven, another trustee area in Watsonville, the lone candidate is Mike Kostyal. David Moore is the current Area Seven trustee, but he is not seeking re-election.

The only trustee seat that is contested is in Area Three, the Capitola area. There, trustee Helen Palmer will face Robert Buse Jr.